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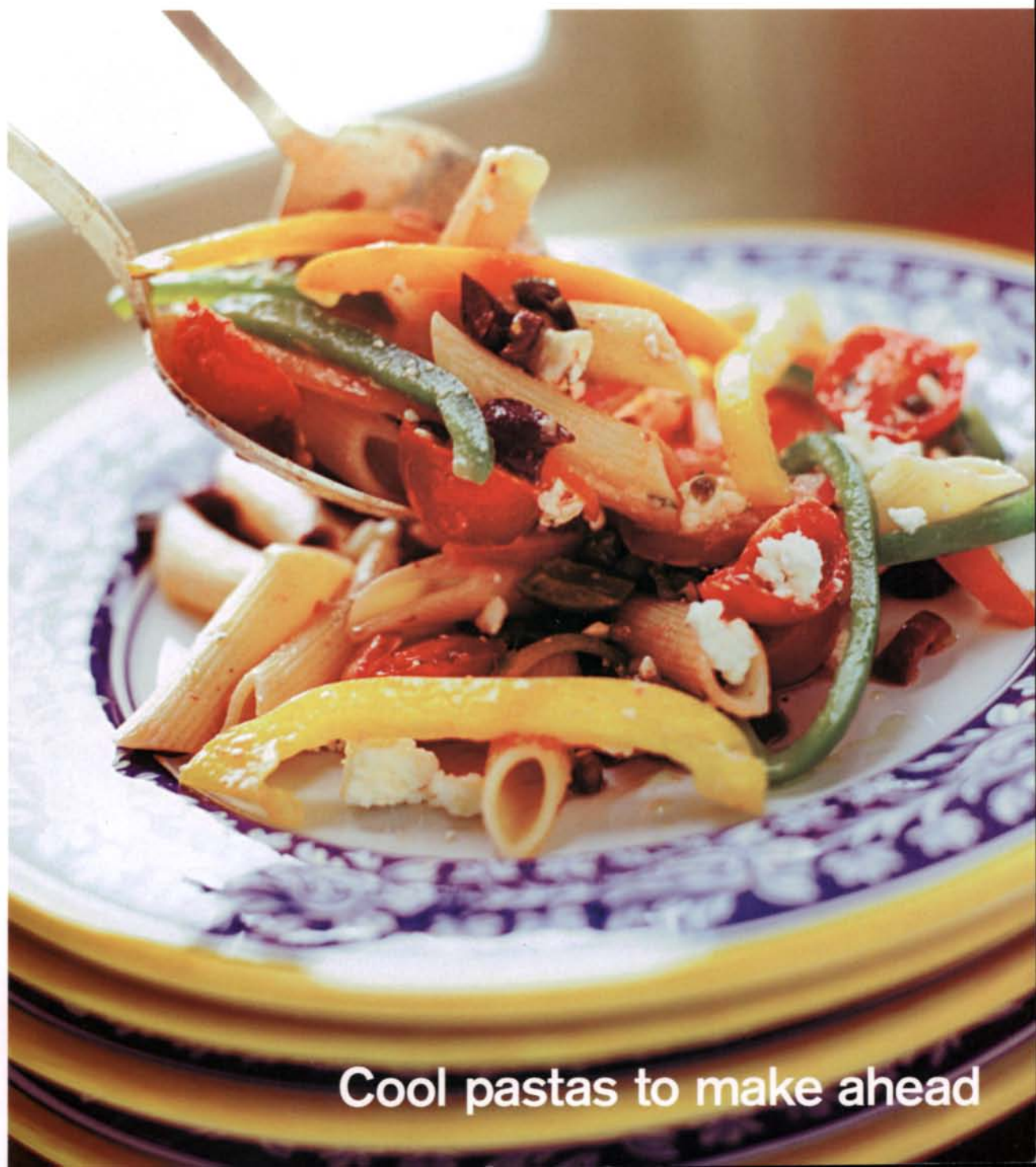
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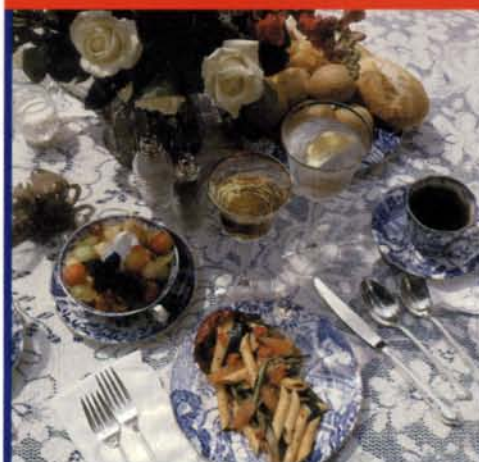
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On the cover: Cool Penne with Olives, Capers & Feta, p. 36.

Cover photo, France Ruffenach.

These pages: top left series and center, Scott Phillips; top right, Judi Rutz; below and bottom left, Martha Holmberg.



64 Serve a sparkling fresh tomato salad as part of an olive oil tasting menu.



Su-Mei Yu ("Masmun Curry," p. 58) is the chef-owner of Saffron restaurant in San Diego, California. Born to Chinese parents who emigrated to Thailand before she was born, Su-Mei is passionate about recreating the aromas and flavors she remembers from growing up in Bangkok. *Cracking the Coconut*, her book on traditional Thai home cooking, is due out from William Morrow this August. Su-Mei lives in La Jolla, California.

Award-winning cooking teacher **Joanne Weir** ("Cool Pastas," p. 32) has added a successful public television series, *Weir Cooking in the Wine Country*, to her impressive list of teaching and writing accomplishments.



After spending five years cooking at Chez Panisse as well as a year studying with Madeleine Kamman, Joanne now travels across the U.S., Italy, and Australia, teaching her

delicious and accessible California cuisine. Her books include *From Tapas to Meze* and *You Say Tomato*, and she has a column in the *San Francisco Chronicle's* food section.

Paul Kirk ("Barbecued Chicken," p. 37) has won over 400 barbecue and cooking awards, including grand champion of the American Royal Open, the world's largest barbecue contest. The author of *Paul Kirk's*

Championship Barbecue Sauce Cookbook (Harvard Common Press), he teaches barbecue at classes across the country. He lives in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, where he's at work on another barbecue cookbook.

Brian Patterson ("Roasting Peppers," p. 40) graduated with distinction from L'Academie de Cuisine in Bethesda, Maryland, in 1987. While working as a chef in Washington, D.C., restaurants, he was accepted to the prestigious Beringer Vineyards School for American Chefs, where he worked with Madeleine Kamman. Brian is an instructor at L'Academie de Cuisine when he isn't at his day job as chef and hospitality manager of the American Medical Association's Congressional Affairs Office.

Susie Middleton is a grilling nut ("Potatoes on the Grill," p. 44) and the managing editor of *Fine Cooking*.

Amy Albert, an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*, still isn't tired of mashed potatoes, even after researching and writing "Food Mills" (p. 49).



Brian Streeter ("How to Cook with Wine," p. 52) is the chef at Cakebread Cellars in Rutherford, California. When he's not cooking at the vineyard or foraging

in its garden, he's probably teaching. This year, Brian taught 32 fifth-graders about cuisines of the world and sustainable agriculture through the Chefs Collaborative 2000 Adopt-a-School program. A graduate of the New England Culinary Institute, he lives in Napa, California.



Randall Price ("Fresh Fruit Gratins," p. 56) was working as a chef in Ohio when a chocolate cake changed his life: he entered a contest sponsored by *Choco-*

latier magazine, won a pastry course at La Varenne in Paris, and from there launched

a career in Europe as a chef, caterer, and teacher, including several years as chef to the U.S. ambassador to Hungary. Randall currently consults and teaches at La Varenne's Château du Fey and cooks for private clients in Paris and the Auvergne.



Georgeanne Brennan ("Olive Oil Tasting Party," p. 64) is a teacher, food writer, and expert on growing and cooking with fruits and vegetables. She divides

her time between her house in Provence and her small farm in northern California. The author of several cookbooks, including the award-winning *Food & Flavors of Haute Provence* (Chronicle), Georgeanne will open the doors of her own cooking school in Haute Provence in September.

After working as a restaurant owner and caterer, **Peggy Knickerbocker** ("Olive Oil Primer," p. 69) shifted gears ten years ago to become a food and travel writer. She gives cooking classes and lectures about olive oil across the country (as well as in Spain and Italy). Her book, *Olive Oil: From Tree to Table*, was nominated for a Julia Child/IACP award in 1998.

When **Pierre Hermé** ("Parfaits," p. 72) was just 14, Gaston Lenôtre asked the gifted young man to be his apprentice. Ten years later, Pierre took over the pastry kitchen at



Fauchon in Paris, where his innovative "collections" turned him into an international star in the pastry world. In 1997, he became the youngest person to be named France's

pastry chef of the year. American home cooks were finally introduced to some of his fantastic creations when *Desserts by Pierre Hermé* (Little, Brown) came out in 1998. Pierre lives in Paris but travels frequently to the U.S., where he is a consultant to Wegmans supermarket, and to Tokyo, where he owns two *pâtisseries* and tea salons.

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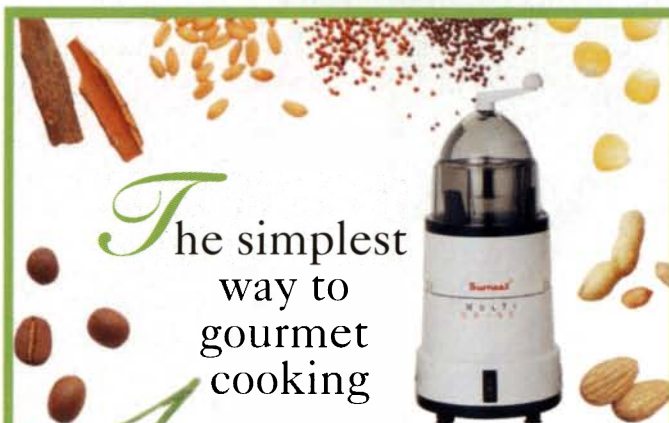
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Here's the place to share your thoughts on our recent articles or your food and cooking philosophies. Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to fc@taunton.com.

How green is my frittata

In *Fine Cooking* #37 (p. 33), you have a wonderful article about broccoli and all its uses. I made the frittata and the flavor was very good, but the photograph in your magazine showed a yellow frittata in contrast to my grassy green one. How is it that photographs in cookbooks and magazines so often differ from the food cooked exactly according to the recipes?

—Franka Frost, e-mail

Editors' reply: One of the fascinating things we've learned through years of recipe development and testing is that even when two people cook from the exact same recipe, their results are rarely identical. There's just no way to account in a recipe for all the possible variables: how long the broccoli sat in the grocery store, how sharp your knife is, how hot the "high" setting of your burner is, whether the bottom of your pan is a tiny bit warped, how many times you needed to stir to fully incorporate the ingredients.

As for the food in our photographs, however, it is *always* prepared using the real recipe, and in many cases it's prepared by the author of the recipe.

It's true that colors can shift a bit between the real thing and the final ink on the page, but our photographs should look at least close to your results; in fact, we often get calls and letters saying as much.

In the case of our yellow frittata, the strong lighting in the photo may have muted the green a bit, or the author might not have chopped her broccoli as enthusiastically as you did!

Crisp crusts from an unglazed pie plate

I have good news for Mary V. Foote (and other pie-baking enthusiasts) regarding the unglazed stoneware pie plate she was looking for (Letters, *Fine Cooking* #38). The only source I have found for unglazed natural stoneware pie plates is The Pampered Chef. I have had amazing results—a nicely browned, crisp, and flaky pie crust every time. An unglazed stoneware pie plate is all I will cook my pies in; they turn out far superior to any baked in metal or glass.

—Tanya Furtado, Redmond, WA

Editors' note: Thanks also to Kathleen Wolf, Marjorie Wilson, and Jerome Albin, who also directed us to The Pampered Chef, which is a direct-selling company specializing in cookware for the home chef. You can order the pie plate from one of the company's "kitchen consultants"; to be put in touch with a consultant in your area, call 800/266-5562 or visit www.pamperedchef.com.

Our knife sharpening article cut too deep

I read with interest "How to Sharpen Knives & Keep Them Sharp" (*Fine Cooking* #37, p. 16). Although we appreciate your comment that Chef'sChoice electric sharpeners "make knives much sharper," your further remarks about our sharpeners shortening the knife's life by grinding away too much metal is misleading and just plain wrong!

If anything, the opposite is true. Since Chef'sChoice sharpeners incorporate precision guides, the knife is always

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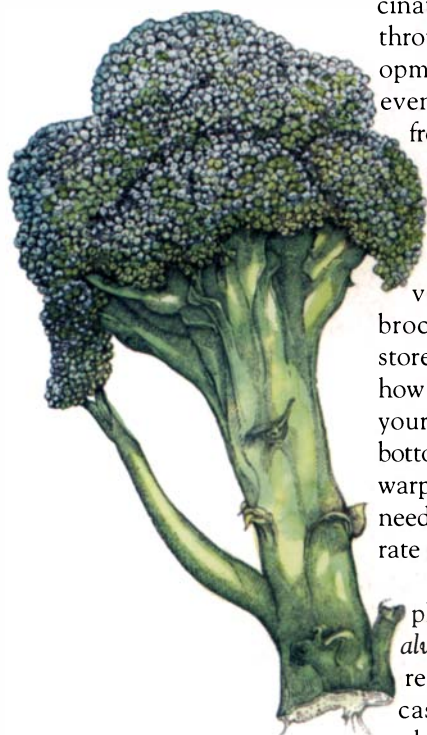
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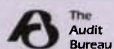
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presented to the abrasive at exactly the same angle at which it was first sharpened, thereby removing the minimum amount of metal necessary to attain a renewed sharp edge. Resharpener with a steel or stone will result in more metal removal since it's virtually impossible to resharpen at the same angle that the knife was previously sharpened. And finally, a major advantage of Chef'sChoice sharpeners is that they extend the life of a knife. Because the sharpening angle in our sharpeners increases slightly in each stage, the resulting edge has a convex (gothic arch) profile which stays sharp two to three times longer than conventional edges. Therefore, knives sharpened in Chef's Choice sharpeners need less resharpening and last longer.

We are passing along these comments not to be critical but because we are passionate about sharpening. We want people to have sharp knives because we thoroughly agree with the lead-in sentence of your article: "Dull knives are why some people don't like to cook."

—Sam Weiner, president,
EdgeCraft Corporation

Editors' reply: In producing the column, the editor interviewed many cookware, tool, and knife store owners and

other knife experts and found a wide spectrum of opinion regarding the best way to sharpen knives.

Some experts were wary of electric knife sharpeners in general, for the reasons stated above. We should not, however, have edited the piece to make it look as if this warning were about Chef'sChoice sharpeners specifically. It was not. In fact, Chef'sChoice sharpeners, in particular the Model 120, were cited by several knife retailers as the most popular and best choice for the home chef. We apologize for any dismay this may have caused current and future Chef's Choice users.

California's calling

When it comes to California wine and food, we can't get enough, and—based on last year's response to our first visit—neither can our readers. The trip last year was so successful that we're doing it again, October 19–22, 2000.

We expect to see some familiar faces, but we hope that a lot of new folks will get a chance to come with us as we learn by tasting—visiting artisan food producers like Artisan Bakers and DaVero olive oil—and learn by doing, during a day of hands-on classes at the remarkable Greystone campus of the Culinary Institute of America. See the ad

on p. 23 for details about the trip and to get a brochure.

Bay leaf warning

The article on cooking with bay leaf (*Fine Cooking* #37, p. 38) is interesting and informative, the recipes are enticing, and the photos inviting. But I'm concerned about the author's quote, "Rather than removing bay leaves from a dish, I like to leave them in."

Bay leaf does not break down in the digestive system of humans. Fragments can remain sharp. They can tear the throat or esophagus during

swallowing (possibly requiring tracheotomy) or puncture the viscera at any point, which can be fatal.

Encourage your authors and readers to exercise traditional safety standards. Keep whole or broken bay leaves in a cheesecloth bag and remove them before serving.

—Doris K. Fina, Natick, MA

Erratum

In *Fine Cooking* #38, we printed an incorrect URL for Advanced Book Exchange web site. The correct URL is www.abebooks.com.

Getting the most from *Fine Cooking's* recipes

When you cook from a *Fine Cooking* recipe, we want you to get as good a result as we did in our test kitchen, so we recommend that you follow the guidelines below in addition to the recipe instructions.

Before you start to cook, read the recipe completely. Gather the ingredients and prepare them as directed in the recipe list before proceeding to the method. Give your oven plenty of time to heat up; use an oven thermometer to check.

Always start checking for doneness a few minutes before the time given in the recipe; use an instant-read thermometer.

In baking recipes especially, the amounts of some ingredients (flour, butter, nuts, etc.) are listed by weight (pounds, ounces) and by volume (cups, tablespoons). Professional bakers measure by weight for consistent results, but we list volume measures too because not many home cooks have scales (although we highly recommend them—see *Fine Cooking* #13, p. 68, and #17, p. 62).

To measure flour by volume, stir the flour and then lightly spoon it into a dry measure and level it with a knife; don't shake or tap the cup. Measure liquids in glass or plastic liquid measuring cups.

Unless otherwise noted, assume that

- ◆ Butter is unsalted.
- ◆ Eggs are large (about 2 ounces each).
- ◆ Flour is all-purpose (don't sift unless directed to).
- ◆ Sugar is granulated.
- ◆ Garlic, onions, and fresh ginger are peeled.
- ◆ Fresh herbs, greens, and lettuces are washed and dried.

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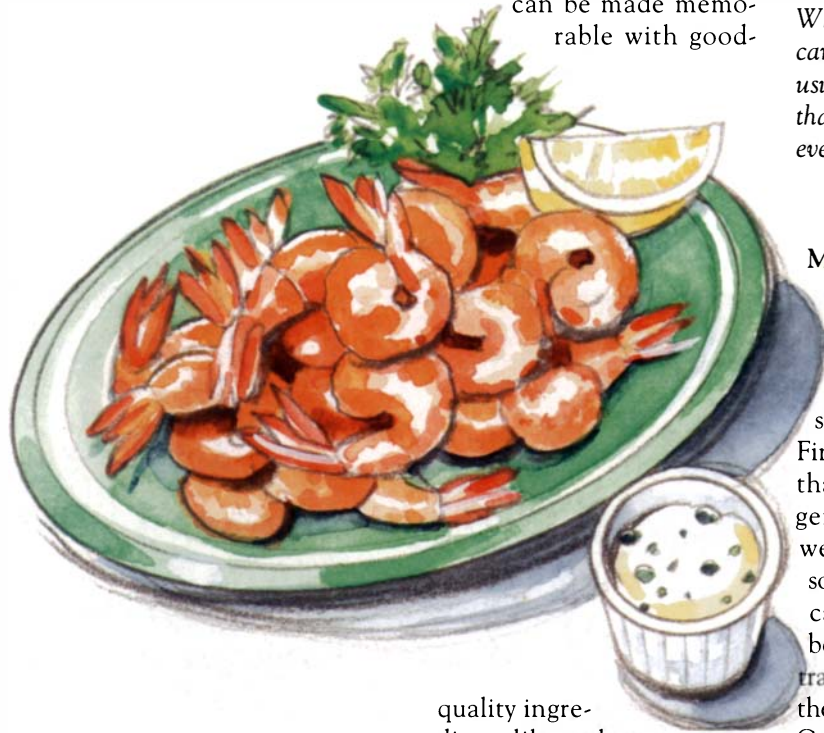
Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to fc@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

Homemade tartar sauce

I'd love to be able to make my own tartar sauce to serve with fried fish. Besides mayonnaise, what else is in it?

—Shawn Stevens,
Worcester, MA

Leslie Revsin replies: Tartar sauce is a simple piquant mixture of mayonnaise, mustard, capers, chopped sour pickles, and often a little minced onion or chives. So often served as a sad, gloppy afterthought, tartar sauce can be made memorable with good-



quality ingredients like real Dijon mustard, French sour pickles, and fresh herbs. We know it's the ideal buddy for fried fish and shellfish, but why not try it as a garnish for grilled chicken, or as a mayonnaise substitute for a slightly different tuna salad?

Here's my recipe for tartar sauce: Mix together until smooth 2 teaspoons French Dijon mustard with ½ cup mayonnaise (either homemade or store-bought). Stir in

1 tablespoon chopped sour pickles (I like French cornichons), 1 teaspoon capers, drained and slightly chopped, 1 tablespoon chopped parsley (or a mix of parsley, minced chives, and fresh tarragon). Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Serve the sauce right away or cover and refrigerate for up to two weeks. *Leslie Revsin wrote Great Fish, Quick (Doubleday).*

The secret to sweet caramelized onions

What's the right technique for caramelizing onions? Mine usually burn before they get that deep mahogany color, even if I use a low heat.

—David Ullrich,
Raleigh, NC

Molly Stevens replies: Two significant things occur when we cook onions (or any other member of the onion family, including shallots, leeks, and garlic). First, the sulfur compounds that give onions their pungency (and that make us weep) evaporate. Second, some of the onion's complex carbohydrates, or starches, begin to break down and transform into sugars, making the onions slightly sweet. Caramelized onions are just an exaggerated example of this transformation of starch into sugars.

There are several tricks to caramelizing onions, but none is more important than giving them time. Set the burner as low as possible and expect the entire process to take close to 1½ hours for about 2 pounds of onions.

It's also important to let the onions soften completely before they begin to brown.

The idea is to get them to release their liquid, turn limp, and begin to stew, turning sweeter and sweeter as they go. Cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid during this initial stage to trap the moisture. Also, give the onions enough fat so they don't dry out or and stick to the pan. Two to three tablespoons butter for a 10-inch pan is a good guideline. I sometimes use half butter and half extra-virgin olive oil for flavor.

During the first hour, check on the onions occasionally to be sure they're cooking very slowly and to give them a stir. Once they're completely softened, after about an hour, you can remove the lid, increase the heat to medium (no higher), and let the sugars start to brown. At this point, you may want to add ½ to 1 cup of stock, white wine, or water to dissolve any browned bits that have stuck to the bottom of the pan—this will help develop that deep mahogany color you're after. Continue to cook until all the liquid is evaporated.

Finally, use the right pan. Choose a heavy-based pot or pan that will evenly distribute the heat and will accommodate the onions in a layer that is 2 to 3 inches deep. The onions shrink to less than one-quarter of their original volume, and if the pan is too large, you risk scorching them in the end. Figure on getting about 1 cup of caramelized onions for every pound of raw.

If you want caramelized onions but don't have the luxury of time, you can cheat by using a higher heat and adding either a sprinkle of sugar or a splash of balsamic

vinegar, or both, to the onions once they've wilted and are beginning to brown. This lets you caramelize the onions in a fraction of the time, but they won't have anywhere near the depth of flavor or succulent texture of those made the slow way.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*.

What's that white clump in a raw egg?

I've always wondered what that curly white thing is near the yolk in a raw egg, and whether it belongs with the whites or the yolks when I separate an egg.

—Daniella Bernstein,
St. Louis, MO

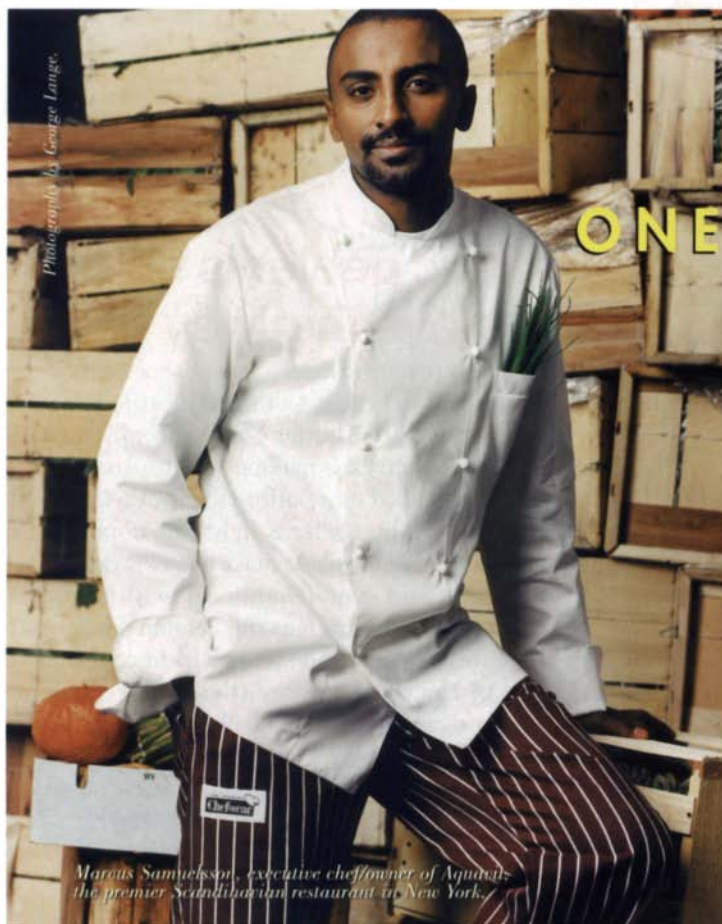
Shirley O. Corriher replies:

Every egg has two of those curly white things, called chalazae (pronounced keh-LAY-zee), which are twisted, cord-like strands of protein that connect the membrane around the yolk to the inside of the shell at either end. They act like shock cords for the developing egg, keeping the yolk suspended so the embryo grows in the center of the egg. When the shell is cracked, the chalazae snap up into a tight wad.

According to the American Egg Board, prominent chalazae in a raw egg are a sign of freshness. For cooking purposes, it doesn't matter

whether it lands in the whites or the yolks (they contain no fat), but when I separate an egg, I try to nudge it toward the whites.

Shirley O. Corriher, a food scientist, is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking* and the author of the award-winning *Cook-Wise* (William Morrow). ♦



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READER SERVICE NO. 41

Grill shellfish on the GreatGrate to save juices

If you cook clams, oysters, and mussels on the grill, you probably know that when they open, they spill out all their delicious juices. Tim Gilchrist, of Swamper Foods in Charlestown, Rhode Island, has come up with a clever solution to this problem. His geometric GreatGrate keeps the rounded shells stable by cradling them in a triangular cutout, which keeps the shell from tipping when it springs open.

I tested it by cooking a few clams on the grate and some directly on the grill.

Sure enough, the clams on the grill spilled their juices into the fire when they opened, while the clams on the grate stayed put—and so did their juices. The only problem was figuring out how to get the clams off the grill. I found that removing the whole grate with tongs (rather than trying to remove one clam at a time) kept the shellfish steady. I was happy to learn that Gilchrist has since added slots to make it easier to lift the grate off the grill (also new is an op-



tional hardwood serving platter that the grate fits into).

The GreatGrate comes in a “single-serving” size (shown here), for \$17.95; an hors d’oeuvre size model for \$10.95; and a large “shellfish lovers” model for \$34.95. The grates can be used in the oven as well. Visit www.greatgrate.com or call 877/768-5766 for more information.

—Susie Middleton, managing editor

The Perfect Purée is pure flavor

A few summers ago when I had to make a lot of cold soup, I discovered a line of high-quality fruit and vegetable purées that came in handy. I couldn’t believe the intense flavor and color of these purées—Red Raspberry, Marion Blackberry, White Peach—which are just pure, ripe fruit, puréed and flash-frozen to preserve flavor. Some have a bit of sugar added, but no artificial preservatives or gums. The company, called The Perfect Purée of Napa Valley, captures fruit at its ripest, and it really shows.

There are now more than forty purées available, and chefs across the country are taking advantage of their convenience and quality to use in much more than soup. In fact, there are more than 300 recipes for sauces, mousses, hors d’oeuvres, savory tarts, ice creams, sorbets, and more posted in a “cookbook” at www.perfectpuree.com. The web site also gives the complete list of flavors, which includes More Mango, California Kiwi, Morello Cherry, Prickly Pear Cactus Fruit, Hawaiian Banana, Positively Pomegranate, Supersweet Corn, Harvest Pumpkin, and Roasted Sweet Yellow Pepper, to name a few.

While the purées are mostly distributed through food-service wholesalers, nonprofessional cooks can order from The Native Game Company (800/952-6321), which will send as little as one jar (shipped frozen via FedEx). Put the 30-ounce jars into the freezer when they arrive, and defrost them overnight in the refrigerator when you want to use them. Prices start at about \$12.99. —S.M.



Kyocera’s ceramic peeler is sharp—and stays that way

For fans of ultra-sharp knives, a Japanese ceramic blade is the ultimate tool, cutting through most food as if it were room-temperature butter. Now Kyocera, manufacturer of ceramic knives, is making an ultra-sharp vegetable peeler—with a more affordable price tag (\$13) than its knives. The peeler is light and comfortable to hold, and its ceramic blade makes quick work of carrots, potatoes, and even lemon peel, with the same smooth-as-butter sensation as the ceramic knife. Like the knife, this peeler’s blade retains its fine edge. The blade can be chipped if dropped (though I accidentally tossed it across the room with no ill effects), and it isn’t recommended for peeling tough rinds like those of some hard squash. It also costs a few more dollars than most peelers, but for an edge this sharp, it’s worth it. The peeler is available through Professional Cutlery Direct (800/859-6994 or www.cutlery.com).

—Amy Albert, associate editor

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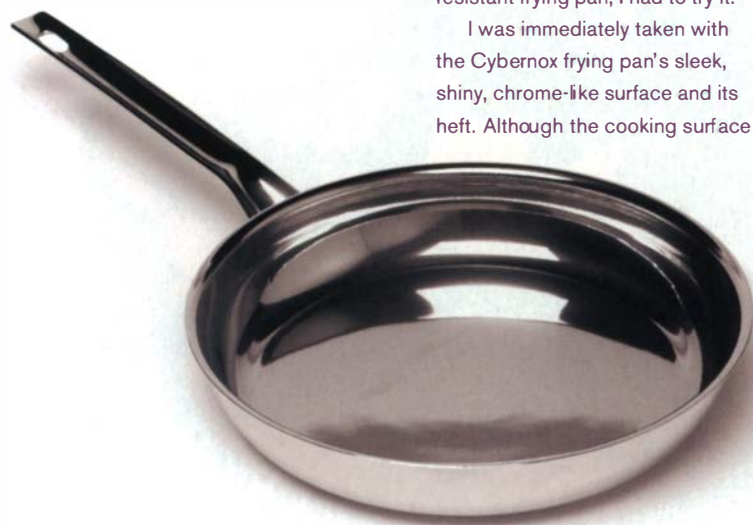


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Cybernox stick-resistant pan is indestructible



There's a standing joke in my house that if any piece of kitchen equipment can be scratched, burned, melted, or simply worn out, I'll find a way to do it. It's not that I'm a negligent cook, I just cook a lot and I cook hard. So when I heard that Sitram (a French manufacturer) had developed an indestructible stick-resistant frying pan, I had to try it.

I was immediately taken with the Cybernox frying pan's sleek, shiny, chrome-like surface and its heft. Although the cooking surface

appears to be no different from the rest of the pan, it's actually a high-tech stick-resistant hard metal alloy that's fused to the heavy-duty stainless steel of the pan. While I'm not entirely clear on the science (the alloy was developed for the aerospace industry), I do know that this pan works beautifully. Sitram doesn't claim that the surface is as slippery as Teflon, but I was able to cook all sorts of meat, fish, and poultry without any added fat—something I can't do in an ordinary stainless pan.

The advantages over traditional nonstick surfaces are enormous. For one thing, there's no worrying about scratching the surface when using metal spatulas, whisks, and tongs. Also, the pan (which has a thick aluminum base) heats evenly and can withstand very high heat—perfect for searing or blackening.

Unlike other nonstick surfaces, Cybernox does allow bits of cara-

melized juices to stick to the pan while the food cooks, which means better flavor and more opportunity for deglazing. I got the best flavor and color when using Cybernox for sautéing with a bit of oil or butter.

The handle might be a drawback for some cooks. Since the pan is rather heavy (the 10.2-inch pan weighs 3 pounds), the edges of the strong rolled-steel handle aren't very comfortable—though the handle does stay cool over even high heat. Also, the straight angle of the handle made it a bit awkward to fit into the sink. On the plus side, the pan cleans like a charm—no matter how badly I managed to mess it up.

The Cybernox frying pan comes in three sizes (9.6, 10.2, and 11 inches) starting at \$122 from www.cookswares.com (800/915-9788) and other suppliers.

—Molly Stevens,
contributing editor

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Tupperware's FridgeSmart containers keep produce fresher

We all do this: get a little overzealous at the grocery store or farmers' market and bring home too many fruits and vegetables. In a few days, the zucchini shrivels up and the carrots go limp. I'm embarrassed to say this happens all too often to me, which is how I wound up try-

ing the new containers from Tupperware that promised to keep my produce fresher longer. I was skeptical, but after keeping a bunch of carrots in one of these handy blue boxes for a week, I was hooked. I actually forgot about the carrots, and when I went to retrieve them, they were crisp, firm, and fresh, almost as if I'd just brought them home.

The secret to the FridgeSmart containers (which come in three sizes, are stackable, and can go anywhere in your refrigerator) is an adjustable airflow system. Different vegetables need different amounts of oxygen, so two small tabs on the side of each box let you regulate airflow. The boxes have very tight-fitting lids.

The set of three boxes (\$38.50) is a few more dollars than the average supermarket storage containers, but they could save you several dollars on your monthly grocery bill. The boxes can also be purchased separately, but only the large one and the set come with a reference card that shows you how much air different fruits and vegetables need. You can buy Tupperware on the Net at www.tupperware.com or call 800/858-721 for a distributor in your area.

—S. M.



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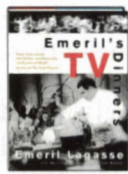


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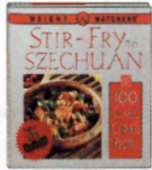
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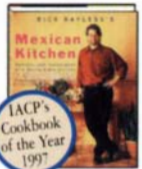
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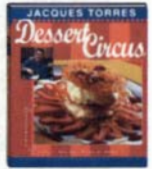
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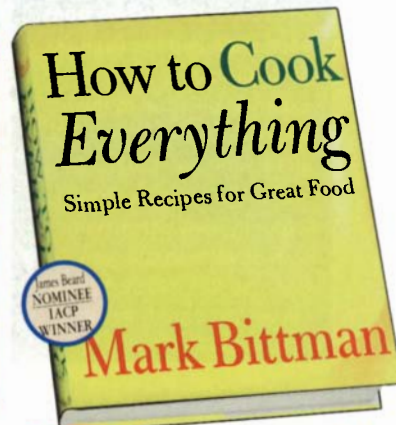
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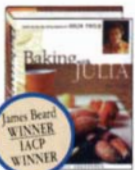
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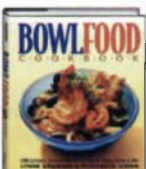
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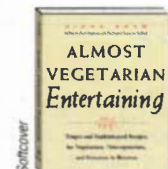
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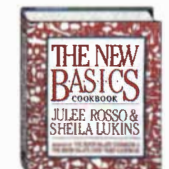
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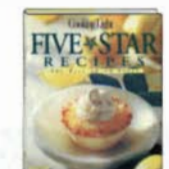
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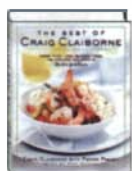
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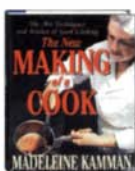
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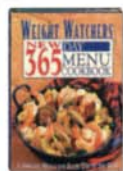
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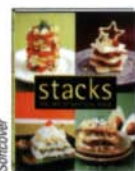
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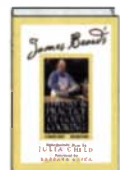
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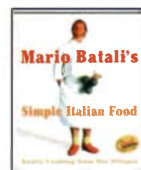
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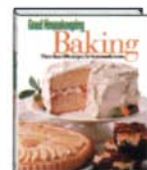
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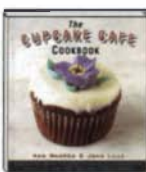
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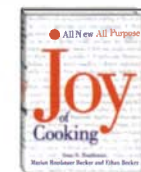
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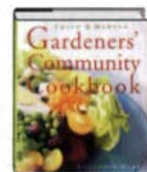
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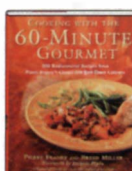
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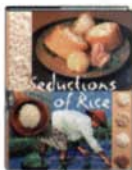
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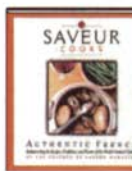
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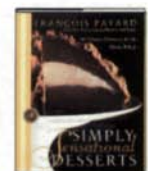
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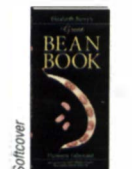
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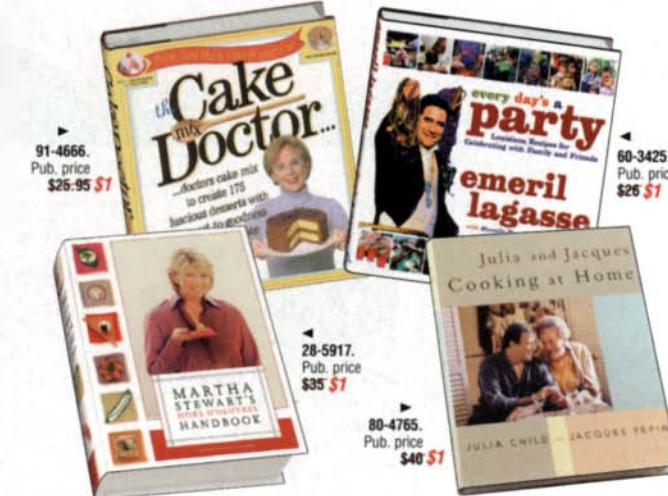
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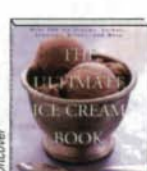
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Make a flavorful shellfish broth

The next time you peel shrimp, don't throw away the shells. With the shells from shrimp, crab, lobster, crayfish (or a mix), you can quickly and easily make a flavorful broth that's a wonderful base for soups and sauces and for cooking dishes such as paella, gumbo, and risotto. You don't even have to make the broth right away. Save the shells that you would have otherwise thrown away, wrap them in plastic wrap, and freeze them until you're ready to make a batch of broth; they'll keep for two months frozen, as will the finished broth.

Crush the shells and add aromatics for a bright, bold flavor

The most basic shellfish broth is made by simmering rinsed crustacean shells (and heads if you have them) in water. While this simple broth often suffices, adding aromatics, such as herbs and vegetables, gives the broth a fuller flavor.

Start by sweating the vegetables in butter or oil. A shellfish broth gains a fullness of flavor with an initial cooking of aromatic vegetables, a *mirepoix*, over low heat. Although you *could* skip this step and simply combine the aromatics with the shells and the water to make a decent stock, this method will more fully release the vegetables' flavor into the liquid. I also find that a little butter or olive oil helps the broth tremendously; much of the flavor of crustacean shells is soluble in fat but not in water.

I usually use one medium carrot and one medium onion per pound of shells. (Keep in mind that shells have different weights, with shrimp being the lightest. It takes about 8 pounds of headless large shrimp to get 1 pound of shells, for example.)

Leeks are another aromatic option, as are shallots. Garlic, fennel, and celery are more potent in flavor, but depending on what you're using the stock for, they can be delicious additions as well.

Crush the shells to draw out the most flavor. To get the most flavor, especially with the harder shells like lobster and crab, it's important to crush them, breaking them into pieces. A food processor works well for most crustacean shells and heads. It quickly chops the shells into tiny pieces, extracting the most flavor. But beware: don't put heavy crab shells or lobster claws in the processor or you'll damage the blade. Crush these harder shells by hand, using a mallet, the end of a European-style rolling pin—the kind without the handles—or the backside of a cleaver. You might want to put the shells in a heavy plastic bag before smashing them to keep the pieces from flying around the kitchen.

Although uncooked shells give the strongest flavor, you can make a good broth from lobster and crab shells that have already been cooked. You may want to freeze shells left over from a lobster dinner. When you add the shells to

Simmer shells with aromatics



Add the crushed shells to the aromatics. The aromatics should first be cooked until soft, and the shells crushed in a food processor or by hand.



Sauté the shells over medium heat until they turn pink or red. Cover the shells with water (4 to 6 cups per pound), bring to a boil, and simmer.



Flavor with a tomato and a bouquet garni, if you like. Simmer the broth for half an hour, skimming occasionally.

the pot, sauté them for a few minutes to release their flavor into the fat.

Add water to cover the shells. Once you've sautéed the shells and aromatics, add the water. For a pound of shells, add about 4 cups water, which makes an intensely flavored broth. A higher ratio of water to shells isn't a cardinal sin, however. (If you're scant on shells, you can also add a little chicken or fish broth to boost the flavor.)

Other flavorful additions include tomatoes, herbs, and spices. I add a tomato, coarsely chopped, with the water for a little acidity and to enhance the color of the broth.

While the broth simmers, you can add other flavorings. I

usually add a *bouquet garni*—a small bunch of parsley, a bay leaf, and some thyme sprigs tied together—but there are many other options. Tarragon, either included in the *bouquet garni* or chopped and added at the end, is a favorite of mine. A pinch of Spanish saffron is the classic addition for a seafood paella, while steeping scallions and slices of ginger in the broth would make sense for an Asian dish.

Simmer the broth for half an hour, or as long as 45 minutes, but longer cooking won't improve the flavor and may even hurt it. Skim off any scum that comes to the surface.

Use care when straining lobster or crab shells. Sharp, heavy pieces of lobster or crab

shells can tear a fine-mesh sieve, so start by straining the broth through a sturdy colander. Push down hard on the shells to extract their juices. Then use your finest mesh sieve to sift out pieces of disintegrated shell.

Taste after straining. This broth isn't meant to be eaten on its own, but it should have a pleasantly sea-like flavor. Don't add salt until you're ready to use the broth, especially if you're reducing it as the base for a sauce; depending on your recipe, you'll want the broth more or less salty.

James Peterson is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. His most recent book is Essentials of Cooking (Artisan). ♦

Strain through a fine sieve



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Rosé is Seriously Good Wine

Don't let that pink hue fool you: rosé is for grownups, and serious wine drinkers love it. It isn't candy-like, it doesn't taste remotely like bubble gum, it's a great partner for food—and come summertime, pink is what you want to drink.

With a low to medium alcohol level, wonderfully perfumy nose, bright acidity, and refreshing blast of red berry flavors, rosé wines are charming. (I normally stay away from wine words that don't evoke flavor or texture, but with rosés, "charming" definitely applies). When you're drinking, that mouthwatering zing of acidity brings you back for another sip, and when you're eating, it sets you up for another bite of food that captures the magic of what eating and drinking is all about.

Rosé comes from red wine grapes

Rosé can be a blend of several different red grape types or made from just one. In southern France, you'll find Grenache-based rosés from appellations such as Tavel and Cairanne, and fuller-bodied Mourvèdre-based rosés from Bandol. There are rosés based on Cabernet Franc from the Loire, and France's most expensive, exquisite rosé wine, rosé Champagne.

The Italians make delicious rosés from Sangiovese, the main grape found in Chianti; the Spanish use Grenache as the French do (in Spanish, it's Garnacha), as well as Tempranillo, the main grape in Rioja. I've enjoyed rosés made from Pinot Noir produced in the Napa Valley. (When they're made from Pinot Noir, lighter rosés are also referred to as *vin gris*—"gray wine"—because of the coppery-pink color the skins give to the juice.) Other delicious rosés from California are made from Rhône-style blends of grapes, such as Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre.

Contact with grape skins gives rosé its color

A wine becomes pink wine before fermentation actually begins. Here are a couple of

different ways that rosé gets its color—and its character.

◆ **Maceration.** After the grapes are crushed, they're moved to a large stainless-steel vat, where the juice stays in contact with the grape skins. After the desired color is achieved, the juice is drained off the skins into another vessel to ferment. Thick-skinned grapes, such as Syrah, Cabernet, or Zinfandel, have shorter skin contact time, while thinner-skinned grapes, such as Grenache or Pinot Noir, are left on the skins longer. The longer the maceration time, the more color, flavor, and character are imparted to the finished wine.

◆ **Saignée**, or "bled." The grapes and skins—usually a

blend of dark-skinned, intensely flavored grapes that would make a big, powerful red wine—are crushed and left in a large, stainless-steel vat. After an hour or two, a certain amount of juice is drawn off or "bled," and fermented into a delicate rosé (the juice that stays behind is made into red wine). *Saignée* allows a winemaker the option of making a delicate rosé wine from intensely flavored grapes (it also concentrates both the color and the flavor in the juice that remains with the skins). The resulting rosé will be complex and flavorful, but lighter than the resulting red wine would be.

◆ **Blending** red and white wines together. This is how a lot of mass-produced blush wines are made. (A lot of people pooh-pooh blush wine, but I don't. Blush gets people

Depending on the grape and the wine-making method, the color of a rosé varies from pale to vivid.



Here are what last year's participants had to say:

Anyone who likes to cook, to eat great food, to drink fine wine, and who enjoys sharing these pleasures with great people will love this trip. Great job.

Curt Kittelson, Sartell, MN

Outstanding experience! The CIA and artisan food tour participants were world-class. *Fine Cooking* staff and HMS were terrific, ensuring the trip ran smoothly.

Hugh Adams, Irving, TX

I applaud the combined successful efforts of HMS and *Fine Cooking*. The event was a wonderful experience—one that I hope to repeat every year!

*Janice Anderson,
Renton, WA*

This flagship event was well planned: all who attended were received with enthusiasm from the start to the Moscato Bianco at the farewell dinner. I have attended many events by the other major competitors, and I'd say you really outdid yourselves.

Donna Tetiva, Montara, CA

The CIA experience was a lifelong dream for a nonprofessional chef. Thank you for the opportunity.

Deb Negrete, San Jose, CA

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We're Cooking in California

Last year, we hosted about 100 readers at our first annual food and wine event in Northern California, and the event was such a smash that we're doing it again. The three-day program is designed for readers who enjoy an in-depth, hands-on approach to learning about food and cooking.

Highlights of the event include:

A reception and farmers' market dine-around. John Ash (one of our favorite *Fine Cooking* contributors and the Culinary Director of Fetzer Vineyards) will help us kick off the event by hosting this "taste of Sonoma County." Spend time with the *Fine Cooking* editors and your fellow participants as you sample the best of artisan food and wine.

Artisan food tours and tastings. We'll hop on mini-buses and travel the back roads to visit and sample the hand-made products of passionate artisan producers such as: Colleen McGlynn of DaVero, where we'll see their 4,500 olive trees and sample their award-winning oils; Cindy Callahan and her

fabulous Italian-inspired Bellwether Farms cheeses; Craig Ponsford, the driving force behind Artisan Bakery and its medal-winning breads. Each itinerary will include at least five artisans.

An evening at Kendall-Jackson's California Coast Wine Center, where we'll have a varietal tasting and a dinner prepared from the region's best ingredients.

A full day of hands-on cooking and instruction at The Culinary Institute of America, Greystone, in St. Helena. Part of the day will be spent exploring the fascinating connections between wine and food; the other half will be spent behind the shiny red Bonnet stoves, working with the CIA's world-class chefs to prepare an array of dishes. We'll sample some of the dishes for lunch and the rest at a grand celebration dinner, served with wines from one of the region's outstanding producers.



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ENJOYING WINE

drinking wine who might not otherwise do so, and this popular seller helps wineries stay in business so they can keep making the high-end stuff.) Blending is also the way rosé Champagne is often made, and in France, that's the only time blending red and white wines is legal.

Rosé is deliciously versatile

Rosé's lively acidity and light to medium body make it a friendly partner for a wide range of flavors. Here are some delicious excuses to open a bottle:

- ◆ Smoked salmon with capers on toast.
- ◆ Tomatoes and garlic on grilled baguette slices.
- ◆ Seared veal chops, especially with fuller-bodied, Mourvèdre-based rosés, like those from Bandol.
- ◆ Seared swordfish or tuna, brushed with some fruity olive oil, smeared with an olive-based tapenade.
- ◆ Paella with shrimp, clams, and scallops.
- ◆ Simple poached salmon with rosé Champagne.

Master Sommelier Tim Gaiser, a wine buyer for wine.com, drinks rosé (and lots of other wines) in San Francisco. ♦

Rosés for versatile food pairing and delicious sipping

Here are a dozen delicious rosés that make for excellent summer sipping. Retail prices are approximate. —the Editors

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| ◆ Beringer Rosé de Saignée (California), \$16 | ◆ Domaines Bunan "Moulin des Costes" (Bandol), \$18 | ◆ Charles Melton Rose of Virginia (South Australia), \$14 | ◆ Château Routas (Coteaux Varois), \$10 | ◆ Joseph Phelps Vin du Mistral Grenache (California), \$12.50 | ◆ Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé Champagne (France), \$55 |
| ◆ Bonny Doon Vin Gris de Cigare Pink Wine (California), \$9 | ◆ Regaleali Rosé (Sicily), \$10 | ◆ Herencia Remondo (Rioja), \$9 | ◆ Robert Sinskey Vin Gris of Pinot Noir (Napa), \$13 | ◆ Domaine Tempier (Bandol), \$25 | ◆ Nicolas Feuillatte Brut Rosé Champagne (France), \$30 |

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Sweet Cherries for Eating, Tart Ones for Cooking



Bing cherries are the most popular and most widely distributed sweet cherry variety. These large, plump fruits have firm, juicy flesh and a rich and vibrant sweet cherry flavor: they're delicious fresh and simple. In cooking, try substituting halved, pitted Bings for strawberries in your favorite shortcake recipe. Make a sweet cherry upside-down cake, substituting Bings for the traditional pineapple.



Ranier cherries can be harder to find than Bings. They're somewhat softer and fleshier and a bit more fragile. Mix them with deeply colored Bings to serve for a pretty summer treat, or make a fresh cherry jam. Queen Anne, another yellow blushed variety, looks like Ranier, but this older variety isn't always quite as sweet.



Montmorency cherries are the most widely grown sour cherry. Fresh or frozen, they're juicy, medium-tart, and perfect for baked desserts, sauces, jellies, or drying. Cherry pie is delicious made with fresh or frozen Montmorencies. I love to use Montmorencies to make jewel-toned cherry jam or to add to oatmeal bars. For cooked sauces to pair with meat or poultry, these cherries combine well with aromatic herb and spice flavors like thyme, mustard, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cumin.

Plump, ripe, rich-flavored cherries are one of the few fruits that are still truly seasonal. This beautiful “tree candy” is irresistible during its short summer harvest season, which lasts from mid-June to mid-August.

Sweet cherries to eat now or freeze for later

Most of the country's sweet cherries come from the prolific orchards of the Pacific Northwest, where the fruits thrive in long summer days and cool summer nights. The cherries are still tree-ripened and hand-picked, with the stems still attached to the fruit. Almost the entire crop is sold for the fresh market.

At the market, look for rich, uniform color. The skin should be shiny and the flesh should be juicy. The very freshest cherries should have bright green stems. Avoid fruits with bruises, soft spots, discoloration, or limp, brown stems.

Treat all cherries with the same light touch you give to berries. Keep them refrigerated for up to five days uncovered, rather than in a sealed plastic bag. Like most tree-ripened fruits, cherries taste best if removed from the fridge an hour or so before serving so they can come to room temperature.

While I do advise taking full advantage of fresh cherries' brief appearance, it's easy to extend their short season by freezing them. Freeze fruits in a single layer for three or four hours, and then seal the

frozen cherries in doubled zip-top bags. Stash them in the freezer to enjoy year-round. Sweet cherries just slightly defrosted are a scrumptious dessert in the dead of winter.

Tart cherries, for pies, sauces, and canning

The United States is one of the world's largest sour cherry producers, and almost the entire crop, grown mainly in Michigan, is used for processed cherry products, including canned cherries, cherrypie filling, frozen loose cherries, dried cherries, cherry juice, and cherry brandy.

Fresh sour cherries are a visual feast: If you're lucky enough to find them at the

market, you'll see vibrant, fire-engine red fruits, with yellow interior flesh. Sour cherries have intense flavor, and they're traditionally used in pies, tarts, cakes, crêpes, dumplings, cordials, confections, and jams, as well as for slightly sweetened sauces for poultry. Look for them in late June and July, a few weeks after sweet cherries have reached the market.

At the market, choose sour cherries that are soft and juicy, like ripe plums. Their thin skins are extremely fragile, so you may see a few bruises. Handle the fruits as you would delicate raspberries and refrigerate them as soon as you get them home. If you're lucky enough to have

more sour cherries than you can use in a few days' time, freeze the extra; it's the best way to hold them.

Sour cherries taste best when cooked. The heat turns their soft pulp and tender skins creamy and develops their flavor—intense and fresh, with just a little acidity.

A big added bonus in eating all cherries is recent medical research indicating that they're a significant source of cancer-fighting antioxidants.

Renee Shepherd is a gardening cook and specialty seed retailer. Her company, Renee's Garden, offers gourmet seed packets at independent nurseries. ♦



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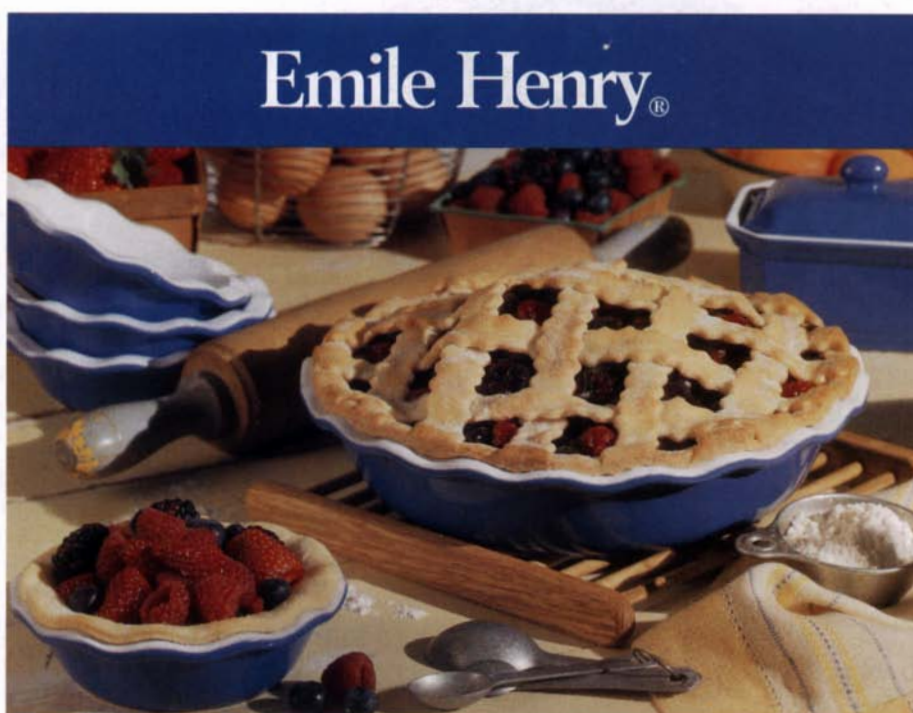
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Try short ribs in chili

I usually make chili with beef chunks that I cut myself from a steak or chuck roast. This produces a stew with more beefy flavor than I could get using ground beef, but it also takes more time and effort to do the cutting and browning of the meat. The last time I was in the mood for chili, I tried another variation: I bought four small short ribs, browned them, and put them in with the chili to simmer. The beef flavor was wonderful.

—Jennifer Winston,
LaGrange, NY



Use a cast-iron griddle pan to “grill” steaks under the broiler.

Simulate grilling in the broiler

I use the ridged side of my cast-iron griddle pan to broil steaks. I heat the griddle under the broiler, ridged side up; when the pan is really hot, I put the steak on it. The heat from the broiler cooks the steak and the ridges on the griddle give me nice grill marks on the steak. The pan also lets the fat drain away.

—Hunter Stevens,
Rockport, MA



Fill empty muffin tin wells with water to keep them from scorching.

Fill empty muffin wells with water

I often make a batch of muffin batter (using the make-ahead recipe from *Fine Cooking* #29) but only bake a few muffins at a time, saving the remaining batter to bake fresh muffins the next day. The only problem I've had is that the empty wells in my partially filled muffin tin scorch in the oven. What I now do is fill the empty wells halfway with water. This not only prevents the muffinless wells from burning, but it also makes the oven more humid, which for muffins seems to be a good thing.

—Ginger DeBlasio
Chicago, IL

Bleach absorbs fish odors

I love frying fish, whether pan-fried catfish or deep-fried shrimp. And I don't usually mind the smell while I'm cooking it or eating it. What I do mind is when I leave the house and return only to find that the house still smells like fish hours or even a day later. A friend offered this tip: put out a little bowl of bleach while frying. (It doesn't matter where you put it, just don't put it somewhere where it might be mistaken for water, or where a curious child or pet might come upon it.) I don't know how it works exactly, but the bleach winds up

with a coating of scum on top of it, and the fishy smell disappears. One warning: use a glass bowl; bleach can corrode a metal one if it's left in it for too long.

—John Martin Taylor,
Charleston, SC

Freeze ginger for easier grating

To keep ginger fresher longer and to make it easier to grate, freeze it. First break off the lobes of the fresh root and wrap them individually in plastic wrap. Put all the pieces into an airtight bag or container, which then goes in the freezer. When a recipe calls for grated ginger, remove a piece from the freezer. Scrape off the papery skin with a serrated knife, if you want. Then start grating—don't let it thaw; the ginger is easier to grate when it's frozen.

—Elizabeth Mason,
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Peach pies year-round

I love making peach pies in winter, so while peaches are still in season, I do the following: I make the peach pie filling. Then I line a metal pie plate with plastic wrap, fill it with my pie filling, wrap it up, and freeze it. When fully frozen, I pop out the wrapped filling (you could slip it into a large zip-top bag for extra protection) and leave it in the

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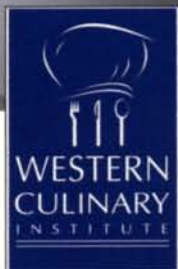
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freezer. When I feel like making a peach pie in a hurry, I simply put the frozen molded pie filling in a crust and bake.

—Sandi Rekis,
Westbank, British Columbia

Stripping thyme leaves

The fastest way to detach tiny thyme leaves from a fresh sprig of the herb is to grip the stem toward the top with one hand, and use the

thumb and forefinger of your other hand to run down the length of the stem, stripping off the leaves as you go. This now seems like an obvious method (it also works well with other herbs with small leaves, like oregano or marjoram, or even for tender sprigs of rosemary) but until I saw it being done by someone else, I had been pulling them off one by one.

—Marian Brown,
Sherman Oaks, CA

Salvage overcooked vegetables by puréeing them

After mistakenly overcooking some broccoli that I was boiling for a pasta dish, I decided to turn the mushy florets into a creamy soup. After puréeing them in the blender with a little broth, I stirred in some

cream and seasoned it with salt, pepper, and a dash of nutmeg. I'm not suggesting that I'll intentionally overcook vegetables in the future, but I realized that this quick change of plans would probably salvage a lot of other steamed or boiled vegetables that turn unpleasantly soft when overcooked.

—Gary Rienza,
Akron, OH

Shallot substitute

When a recipe calls for shallots but I have none, I substitute with an equivalent amount of onion plus a little garlic. For example, if I need 2 tablespoons of minced shallot, I would use 2 tablespoons of minced onion and about a teaspoon of minced garlic.

—Annabelle Wharton,
Eugene, OR ♦

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READER SERVICE NO. 3

Cool Pastas to Make

BY JOANNE WEIR



Every flavor counts in a cool pasta, so Joanne Weir uses her best olive oil.



Cool the pasta first so it doesn't drink up too much dressing, leaving the dish dry and sticky.



Cut the vegetables to mimic the pasta's shape for a salad that's good looking and easy to toss.

I remember when pasta salads in all shapes and forms were just becoming the rage in the United States. At about the same time, I was in Italy and asked an Italian friend if she liked them. She looked at me as if I were from another planet. Funny, I'd assumed we'd stolen the idea from Italy. Come to find out, pasta salads are mostly an American invention—and I think a pretty ingenious one. Why not, especially during the dead of summer, make a “cool” pasta dish rather than a hot one?

Cool pastas, with their simplicity and focus on good, fresh ingredients, lend themselves to warm-weather dining. With the addition of fish or chicken, they can be substantial enough to serve as a meal in themselves. And versatile as they are, cool pastas can be made ahead and served later at room temperature.

You do need to take some steps to avoid the sticky pitfalls of heavy, less delectable pasta “salads.” Dress-

ing and seasoning the pasta carefully (with oil-based vinaigrettes and other vibrant sauces, rather than mayonnaise-based dressings), as well as choosing the best seasonal ingredients, will produce a light, refreshing cool pasta, rather than a typical bland and heavy pasta salad.

For cool pastas with the best texture, use top-quality dried pasta. I look for pasta that's made from 100-percent semolina or durum wheat. Most imported brands of dried pasta, and many domestic ones, are made of semolina or durum wheat. These pastas have a sturdier consistency than those made from softer wheats, and this sturdiness helps it maintain its chewy texture even after being cooked in boiling water, coated with a dressing, and chilled for any length of time.

Choose a pasta shape for your dish according to the sauce you'll be using. If the sauce is on the

Ahead

Toss cooled pasta with
fresh ingredients and
bold sauces for the
best flavor and texture



Let the pasta sit after mixing well so the flavors have time to blend.



Add the accent ingredients last so they don't fade or get soggy.

thicker or chunkier side, a hefty rigatoni is the best choice. If your sauce is thinner and more fluid, fusilli or corkscrew-shaped pasta has lots of surface area to catch the sauce. Pasta shells, large or small, work best with shellfish, because they catch the bits of seafood in the dish. If I'm looking for texture, farfalle (butterfly-shaped or bow-tie pasta), with its puckered center, has the desired toothy quality. For an elegant cool pasta, I love the look of orzo with a finely diced confetti of fresh summer vegetables, dressed with a light lemony vinaigrette. Orecchiette, penne, tortellini, and elbows also work well in cool pastas because they're easy to pick up in one forkful.

Go out of your way for the best-quality, freshest ingredients for summer pastas. After all, this is the time when flavors are at their peak. Seek out the tiniest, sweetest cherry tomatoes or the most color-

ful bell peppers from the farmers' market or your garden. Use just-snipped parsley and mint from pots of herbs, or buy the peppiest-looking fresh herbs you can find. Hit the fish store for fresh mussels and clams. Take the opportunity to buy a really good feta cheese or your favorite olives. And use a splash of that truly delicious fruity extra-virgin olive oil.

For these dishes, it's especially important not to overcook the pasta. You don't want your pasta to be limp and lifeless by the time you serve it. For starters, salt the pasta water (generously) once it has come to a boil. Once the pasta is added, give it a stir occasionally for the first two to three minutes so that the pasta doesn't stick together. Then cook the pasta only until it's *al dente*, which means that when you bite into it, there should still be a slight resistance. Remember that your pasta will continue to cook a bit after it has been drained. After draining, toss the



Rip, don't chop, herb leaves to prevent bruising and wilting for the Herbed Farfalle & Grilled Chicken Pasta.

pasta immediately with a tablespoon or two of olive oil so that it doesn't stick together as it cools.

For a pasta that will be served cool, make a sauce or vinaigrette that actually tastes too bold on its own. Once you add the sauce or vinaigrette to the chilled pasta, the starchiness and neutral flavor of the pasta will temper the sauce's flavor. Also, the flavor of food served cool will be slightly more subtle than food served warm. Taste your sauce again and again as you're making it, and don't be afraid to over-season your sauce or vinaigrette slightly. This might mean a little more salt, pepper, spices, vinegar, or lemon juice than you would normally use.

Not all cool pastas need to be dressed with a typical vinaigrette. A sauce based on a vegetable purée will stay saucy and make a nice dressing as long as it has some acid in it. Try making a sauce that's rich with tomatoes, like the Spanish romesco sauce in the orecchiette recipe at right or a sun-dried tomato pesto. A sauce of puréed green herbs like *salsa verde* is great for a cool pasta, too. In the grilled tuna recipe on p. 36, I use a version of *charmoula*, a spicy Moroccan sauce, to flavor the pasta. I sometimes punch up a basic vinaigrette with "tomato water" (made by cutting a tomato in half, grating the pulp with a box grater, and straining the

result; the almost clear liquid is surprisingly tasty). I also like to add puréed red or yellow peppers or chopped anchovies. If you're adding roasted vegetables to a cool pasta, save the accumulated juices from the pan and add those to the vinaigrette. For a creamy dressing, instead of using mayonnaise, mash



A squeeze of lemon is the last layer of flavor in this zesty pasta filled with basil, mint, and cilantro.

a bit of goat cheese or Gorgonzola with cream or with a vinaigrette base. There are so many options, depending on the season, your market, and your imagination.

Try preparing the different components of a cool pasta ahead of time. I like to cook the pasta, drain it, toss it with oil, and chill it. Then, while the pasta is chilling, I make the sauce, whether it means grilling vegetables, making a vinaigrette, simmering shellfish, or dicing vegetables. Then, an hour or two before I'm ready to serve, I toss all the ingredients together and let it sit for a bit. (Some ingredients, however, like the fresh herb leaves in the Herbed Farfalle & Grilled Chicken Salad at right, are best added at the last minute so they don't wilt or fall apart.) I find that the dish improves when the pasta, dressing, and other components are allowed to sit for at least thirty minutes and up to two hours. I usually don't mix cool pastas much more than a few hours before I want to serve them, though, as they'll lose their freshness after several hours, and are definitely not as appealing after 24 hours.

If you're in a rush, you can mix the pasta dish while the pasta is still slightly warm. In this case the warm pasta will tend to absorb more of the dressing. The pasta itself may be more flavorful, but the dish might be stickier or drier unless you increase the amount of sauce.

I like to serve these pasta dishes cool or close to room temperature, but not cold, so I remove the pasta from the refrigerator about 45 minutes before I'll be serving it. You can serve the pasta chilled; just remember that the flavors won't be as pronounced in a very cold dish. Always taste before serving in case the dish needs a little vinegar or lemon juice to pick up the flavors.

Avoid the pitfalls of heavy pasta "salads" by using vibrant vinaigrettes and vegetable sauces.

Herbed Farfalle & Grilled Chicken

Leaving the herb leaves in large pieces adds a refreshing, rustic quality to this pasta. *Serves six.*

Coarse salt

12 oz. dry farfalle pasta

10 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1 lb. total)

Freshly ground black pepper

7 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp. ground cumin

¼ cup packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

1 cup packed fresh cilantro sprigs

½ cup lightly packed fresh basil leaves, torn

¼ cup packed fresh mint leaves, torn

1 cup packed fresh arugula (tough stems removed)

6 lemon wedges

In a large pot, bring 6 qt. water and 2 Tbs. salt to a boil. Add the farfalle and cook until *al dente*, 10 to 12 min. Drain the pasta and toss it immediately with 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Let the pasta cool completely in the refrigerator.

Heat a cast-iron ridged grill pan or an outdoor barbecue. Brush the chicken breasts with 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Grill the chicken breasts until golden on one side, 4 to 5 min. Turn the breasts, season with salt and pepper, and continue to grill until golden and cooked through, another 6 to 8 min. Let the chicken cool and then cut it on the diagonal into thin strips. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the remaining 8 Tbs. olive oil with the lemon juice, garlic, and cumin. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the farfalle, sliced chicken, parsley, cilantro, basil, mint, and arugula and toss together well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Put the salad in a serving bowl and serve immediately, garnished with the lemon wedges.

Orecchiette Pasta with Romesco Sauce & Roasted Red Peppers

This spicy pasta is terrific on its own, but it's also a perfect foil for grilled shrimp, grilled flank steak, or grilled pork tenderloin. For steak or pork, grill the meat in one piece, and then slice it and lay it over the pasta to let the juices blend in. *Serves six.*

Coarse salt

12 oz. dry orecchiette (little ear-shaped) pasta

6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

3 red bell peppers, roasted (see pp. 40–41)

1 slice coarse-textured white bread

¼ cup skinned almonds

1 cup fresh or canned peeled, seeded, chopped, and drained tomatoes

1 clove garlic, minced

2 tsp. sweet paprika

½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

4 Tbs. Spanish sherry vinegar

Freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley; more whole leaves for garnish

In a large pot, bring 6 qt. water and 2 Tbs. salt to a boil. Add the orecchiette and cook until *al dente*, 10 to 12 min. Drain the pasta and toss it immediately with 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Let the pasta cool completely in the refrigerator. Peel and seed the roasted peppers and cut them into 1-inch pieces.

Heat 1 Tbs. of the olive oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the bread and fry, turning occasionally, until golden on both sides. Transfer the bread to a food processor. In the same skillet over medium heat, fry the almonds, stirring until golden, about 2 min. Add the almonds, tomatoes, garlic, paprika, and red pepper flakes to the processor and pulse several times. In a small bowl, combine the vinegar with the remaining 4 Tbs. olive oil. With the processor running, gradually pour in the olive oil mixture until

To turn a salad into a main dish, you can add grilled shrimp or a few strips of juicy flank steak, perfect with this Orecchiette with Romesco Sauce.



Use a blender to make romesco sauce—a purée of tomatoes, almonds, bread, and spices—to coat pasta shapes like orecchiette or small shells.



well combined and smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Let sit for 1 hour before using.

In a large bowl, toss together the orecchiette, peppers, sauce, and the chopped parsley. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (At this point, the pasta can be held for a few hours in the refrigerator, if you like.) Put the pasta in a serving bowl and garnish with the parsley leaves (and grilled shrimp or sliced grilled meat, if using).



Bold Moroccan flavors—cumin, cayenne, garlic, cilantro, lemon—make this cool pasta a natural partner for grilled or seared tuna.

Moroccan Pasta with Grilled Tuna

I like to serve the grilled tuna sliced on top of the spicy pasta, garnished with a few extra cilantro leaves and lemon wedges. If you like, you can break the tuna into chunks and mix it into the pasta. You can find semolina fusilli in most groceries. *Serves six.*

Coarse salt
12 oz. dry fusilli pasta
10 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1½ tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. sweet paprika
¼ tsp. turmeric
¼ tsp. cayenne
3 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup minced yellow onion
⅓ cup packed chopped cilantro leaves, plus ¼ cup whole cilantro leaves
¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
6 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
Freshly ground black pepper
1 lb. fresh tuna (about 1 inch thick)
Lemon wedges as a garnish

In a large pot, bring 6 qt. water and 2 Tbs. salt to a boil. Add the fusilli and cook until *al dente*, 12 to

15 min. Drain the pasta and toss it immediately with 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Let the pasta cool completely in the refrigerator.

Start a charcoal or gas grill. In a blender or food processor, purée the cumin, paprika, turmeric, cayenne, garlic, onion, the chopped cilantro, the parsley, lemon juice, 8 Tbs. of the olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste. Put the mixture in a large bowl.

Brush the tuna with the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil, season it with salt and pepper, and grill it over a medium-hot fire for 6 to 8 min., turning occasionally until it's cooked to the doneness you like. Remove from the grill. When the tuna is cool enough to handle, slice it into strips or break it into 1-inch pieces.

Add the fusilli to the sauce and toss to combine thoroughly. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (At this point, you can hold the pasta in the refrigerator for 2 hours, if you like. Bring to room temperature before proceeding.) Put the salad in a serving bowl and garnish with the tuna, the whole cilantro leaves, and the lemon wedges.

Cool Penne with Olives, Capers & Feta

The bright Mediterranean flavors in this pasta make it a terrific accompaniment to grilled full-flavored fish such as bluefish, mackerel, or salmon. *Serves six.*

Coarse salt
12 oz. dry penne pasta
7 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
7 Tbs. red-wine vinegar
2 cloves garlic, minced
Freshly ground black pepper
1 Tbs. chopped fresh oregano
1 cup thinly sliced red onion
¾ cup pitted kalamata olives, very coarsely chopped
5 Tbs. drained capers
1 small green bell pepper, thinly sliced
1 small yellow or orange bell pepper, thinly sliced
1 pint tiny cherry tomatoes (red or yellow or a mix) or grape tomatoes, halved or quartered
8 oz. feta, crumbled
Oregano sprigs as a garnish

In a large pot, bring 6 qt. water and 2 Tbs. salt to a boil. Add the penne and cook until *al dente*, 10 to 12 min. Drain the pasta and toss it immediately with 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Let it cool completely in the refrigerator.

In a large bowl, whisk the remaining 6 Tbs. olive oil with the vinegar and garlic. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the penne, the chopped oregano, red onions, olives, capers, bell peppers, and cherry tomatoes. (At this point, you can refrigerate the pasta for up to a few hours.) To serve, add the feta and stir until just combined. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Turn the pasta into a serving bowl and garnish with the oregano sprigs.

Joanne Weir is an award-winning cookbook author and the host of Weir Cooking in the Wine Country on public television. This is her sixth article for Fine Cooking. ♦

How to Barbecue Chicken without Burning It

Keep the
heat low and
brush on the
sauce at the
last minute

BY PAUL KIRK

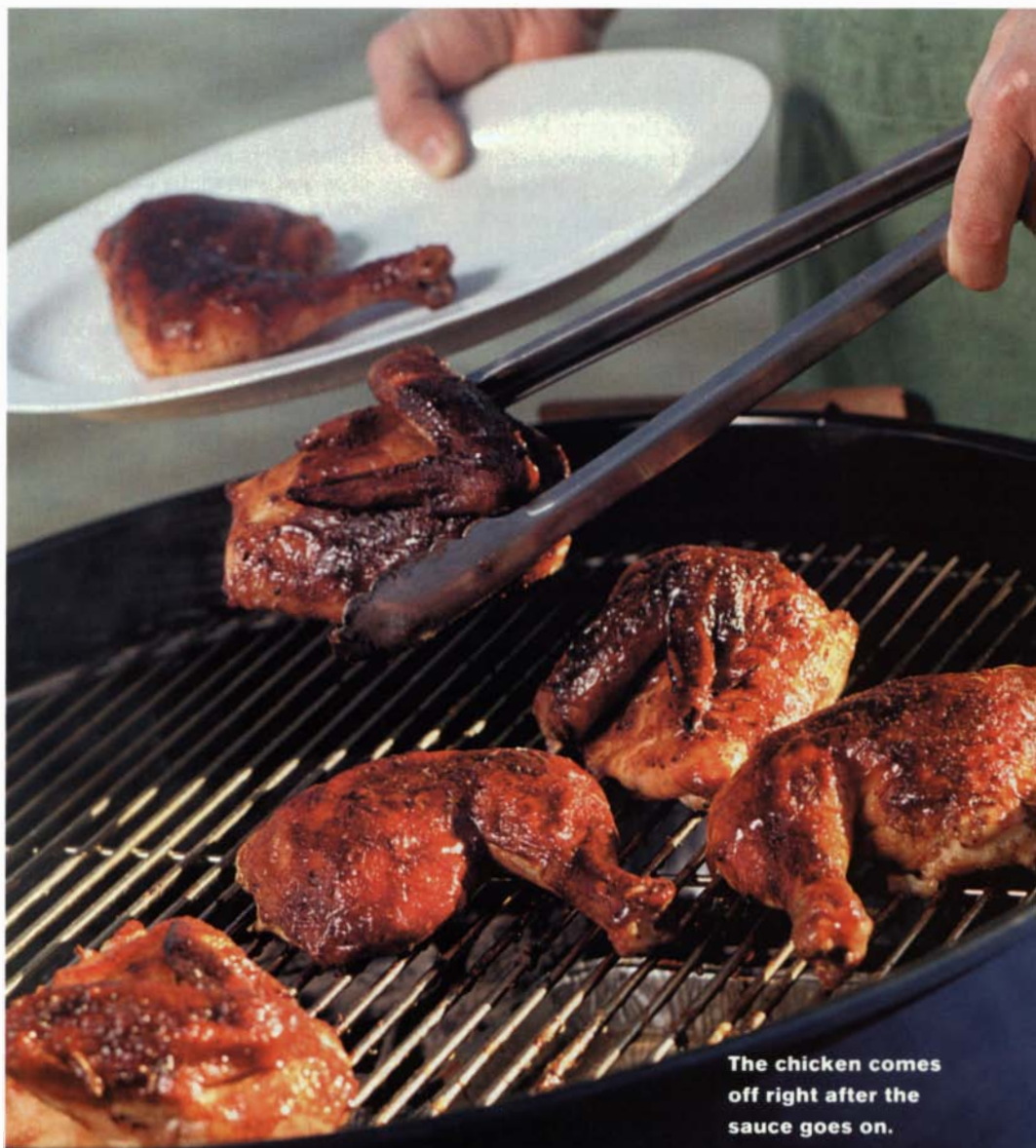
In my experience—not as a barbecue champ or a cooking instructor but as a dinner guest—the food I see most abused when I go to a cookout is chicken. The combination of fatty skin, sweet barbecue sauce, and high heat results in what often looks like chunks of cinder. You can try scraping off that bitter, black coating, but its flavor and aroma—what I call “eau d’ashtray”—flavors the meat.

The secret to great barbecued chicken, one with moist, tender meat and sticky, pleasantly smoky skin, is to lower the heat of the fire and leave the sauce off until the last minutes of cooking. Most of the flavor comes from a spice rub that’s been on the bird from the get-go and from the smoke of the fire, both of which fully permeate the meat during the long, slow cooking.

My method may take longer than most recipes for barbecued chicken, but there’s less work involved. Because you’re cooking over a low fire, and because the sauce (the real culprit behind cinder-chicken) doesn’t go on until late in the game, you don’t have to stand vigil, moving chicken pieces around a hot fire and trying in vain to stave off the inevitable flare-ups.

The chicken is seasoned, but not sauced, for most of the cooking

I usually buy whole broiler-fryers and cut them up myself. You save a little money buying a whole chicken, and you can use the neck, back, and wing tips to make broth. But chicken that’s already cut up is



The chicken comes off right after the sauce goes on.



Position a pan of water next to the coals. This helps keep the chicken moist as it cooks.



Arrange the chicken—covered in spices only—anywhere but over the fire. The bigger pieces go closest to the flame.

very convenient, so go ahead and buy your favorite parts for the grill.

The spice rub and the sauce recipes make enough for at least eight pounds of chicken, more than you may even be able to fit on a single grill. You can save any extra spice mix in an airtight container for a couple of months. Any extra sauce can go right in the freezer. Just keep the sauce that you plan to save separate from the sauce you plan to brush onto the chicken so that it doesn't get contaminated.

You can pretty much ignore the chicken as it cooks. The chicken will take 2½ to 3 hours to cook. You'll need to check the fire, adding coals now and then to keep the temperature of the grill between 230° and 250°F, but that's only about every 30 to 45 minutes. I also baste the chicken at least once with apple juice, but you don't even have to do that. At first, you won't believe that the fire is hot enough to cook the chicken, and you'll wonder if anything is happening at all. But just give it time.

Slather on the sauce when the chicken is cooked. The sauce needs only five minutes to adhere nicely to the chicken. Since the fire isn't really hot, the chicken won't get that charred look, just a nice shine. But this is the time to be vigilant; if the fire has gotten hot, it can make the sauce burn even at this late juncture. Be armed with tongs to remove the chicken at the first sign of charring.

RECIPES

Spice Rub

This is a good all-purpose rub for chicken, and it goes well with all the sauces that follow. *Yields about 4½ ounces; enough for about 8 pounds of chicken.*

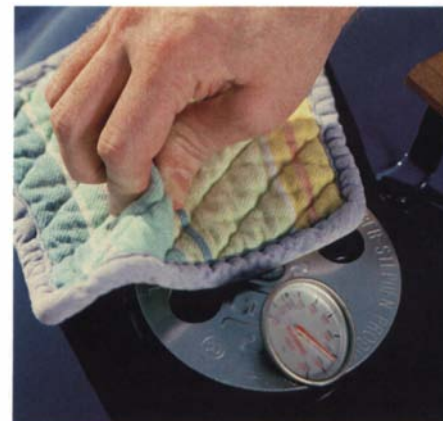
¼ cup sugar
2 Tbs. onion salt
1 Tbs. seasoned salt, such as Lawry's
1 Tbs. garlic salt
2 Tbs. paprika
1½ tsp. chili powder
1½ tsp. lemon pepper
1 Tbs. dried sage
½ tsp. dried basil
½ tsp. dried rosemary, crumbled
¼ tsp. cayenne

Combine all the ingredients and blend well. Store in an airtight container.

Classic Kansas City Barbecue Sauce

Both this sauce and the Memphis sauce that follows are tomato based. This Kansas City sauce is a little sweeter and, with the addition of butter, a little more round in flavor. The method for all three sauces is the same. *Yields about 3 cups.*

½ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
1 Tbs. onion salt
1½ tsp. celery seeds
1½ tsp. garlic powder
1½ tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. finely ground black pepper
1 tsp. ground cumin
½ tsp. cayenne
2 cups tomato ketchup



Maintain a temperature between 230° and 250°F, opening or closing the vents and adding charcoal as needed.

¼ cup white vinegar; more to taste
2 Tbs. prepared yellow mustard
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. liquid smoke (optional)
4 Tbs. butter, cubed and chilled

In a medium saucepan, combine all the ingredients except the butter. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. (You may want to have a lid handy to protect yourself and your kitchen from any sputtering.) Reduce the heat and simmer for 25 min., stirring occasionally. With a whisk, blend in the butter cubes, a couple at a time, until incorporated.

Memphis Style Barbecue Sauce

"Memphis style" used to mean vinegar and pepper, and then tomato and brown sugar found their way into the mix. This

sauce has a more bitter bite than the Kansas City. Try them side by side and see which you prefer. *Yields about 3 cups.*

½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 Tbs. chili powder
1 Tbs. finely ground black pepper
1 Tbs. onion powder
2 tsp. garlic powder
2 tsp. celery salt
¼ to ½ tsp. cayenne (optional)
2 cups tomato ketchup
½ cup prepared mustard
¼ cup cider vinegar
3 Tbs. Worcestershire sauce
2 tsp. liquid smoke (optional)
2 Tbs. canola oil

For the method, see the Classic Kansas City Barbecue Sauce recipe at left, adding the oil where the recipe calls for butter.

Georgia Peach Barbecue Sauce

This is the sweetest of the three sauces. You can add a tablespoon or so of peach liqueur for more peach flavor. *Yields about 4 cups.*

½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 Tbs. onion salt
2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. ground ginger
¼ tsp. ground cloves
¼ tsp. ground mace
⅓ cup white vinegar
2 cups tomato ketchup
1 cup peach preserves, puréed
2 Tbs. Worcestershire sauce
2 Tbs. honey
4 Tbs. butter, cubed and well chilled

For the method, see the Classic Kansas City Barbecue Sauce recipe at left.

Master Recipe for Barbecuing Chicken

Using a gas grill can be easier because you can control the fire with the turn of a button. The drawback is that you don't get as good a smoked flavor. If your gas grill has a smoke box that sits on or between the burners, put wood chips or sawdust in it to give your chicken some smoky flavor. Or wrap some wood chips or sawdust envelope-style in heavy-duty foil. Poke holes in the top and set it on the grill's lava rocks or burner to produce some smoke. *Serves eight to ten.*

7 to 8 lb. bone-in chicken parts, cut as you like
1 recipe Spice Rub (at left)
1 cup apple juice for basting
1 recipe Classic Kansas City, Memphis Style, or Georgia Peach barbecue sauce (at left and above)

To prepare the chicken—Rinse and pat dry the chicken pieces. Sprinkle on the rub generously.

To prepare the fire—Using a chimney starter, light 40 to 50 pieces of good-quality lump charcoal. When the coals are glowing, transfer them from the chimney to one side of the grill. (If you don't have a chimney starter, stack the charcoal around some crumpled newspaper in a pyramid in the grill and light the newspaper. The coals will be hot in 20 to 30 min.)

If you have some pieces of apple or oak hardwood, feel free to add a couple to the stack of coals. Put a small foil or metal pan full of water next to the coals. Position the grilling grate so that one of the holes is over the coals so you can add coals and wood chips as needed.

When the coals are about 90% white, position the pieces of chicken, skin side up, on the grill anywhere except directly



Baste with apple juice after half an hour. Continue to cook the chicken for about 3 hours, basting every 45 minutes.

over the coals. Cover the grill with the lid, making sure that the air vent is opposite the fire. Cook the chicken for about 30 min., maintaining a temperature of 230° to 250°F by adjusting the vents. (Opening the vents lets in more oxygen and raises the temperature.) Add more charcoal if the temperature drops below 230°F. You'll likely need to add 15 to 20 pieces about 30 min. after putting the chicken on.

If you're using a gas grill—Get one side of the grill hot and arrange the chicken on the other side. Close the lid

and maintain the temperature of the grill between 230° and 250°F.

If your grill—gas or charcoal—didn't come with a thermometer, you can set an oven thermometer on the grate near where the chicken is cooking.

After a half hour or so, baste the chicken with some of the apple juice. Continue to cook the chicken until it's cooked through—this will take about 3 hours—basting it and checking the temperature of the grill every 45 min. or so. As the chicken cooks, you can move the pieces around the grill if those closest to the fire seem in danger of overcooking. But keep the chicken skin side up for the duration.

Check for doneness with an instant-read thermometer after 2½ hours. Cooked chicken should read 165°F in the meatiest part of the thigh or breast. You'll also know the chicken is done when its juices run clear after being sliced into with a knife.

When the chicken is cooked, pour some of the barbecue sauce into a separate container (to avoid contaminating the whole batch) and brush it onto the chicken. Cook it an additional few minutes so that the sauce adheres to the chicken in a sticky glaze; watch the chicken carefully at this point and pull it off the grill if the sauce starts to burn.

Remove the chicken from the grill and serve with some of the barbecue sauce on the side, if you like.

Paul Kirk is the author of Paul Kirk's Championship Barbecue Sauce Cookbook (Harvard Common Press). ♦



Wait until the chicken is cooked through before basting with the sauce. Give it a couple of minutes on the fire for the sauce to glaze the meat.

Three Steps to the Sweetest Peppers

Char, steam, and peel bell peppers; then use the tender flesh for salads, soups, sauces, and appetizers

BY BRIAN PATTERSON

A ripe bell pepper is delicious raw, so why mess with it by roasting it? Because fire does something magical to a pepper, transforming its flavor and texture into something sweeter, juicier, and softer—and ultimately more versatile—than it was before. Abandoning its raw and crunchy personality, this new pepper has a greater affinity to pasta and crosses a flavor bridge to roasted meats and fish. It purées into a silky coulis, makes a velvety soup, and rolls up into a tidy appetizer. All this, and you also get the primal satisfaction of cooking with fire, which is something I always get a kick out of.

Choose your fire—gas, electric or charcoal

Your main objective when roasting a pepper is to separate the outer millimeter of thin skin from the thick flesh of the fruit. The best way to accomplish this is by charring the outer skin of the pepper over (or under) high heat. Regardless of your heat source—an open fire, a charcoal or gas grill, a broiler, or a gas flame (more on this below)—your goal is to blacken the skin of the pepper all over. As the pepper heats up and blackens, moisture weeps from the flesh. As a result, the skin blisters.

In the time it takes the skin to blister away from the fruit, the flesh of the pepper itself is cooking. Therefore, a higher, more direct heat (from a charcoal fire or a high-BTU gas burner) will separate the skin more quickly, rendering a firmer, less intensely flavored roasted pepper. A lower heat (from an electric broiler, for instance) will cook the flesh of the pepper more because the skin takes longer to blister, producing a softer, and slightly sweeter, pepper. Both results are tasty; it's just a matter of preference as to which you like better.

My favorite source of heat for roasting peppers is a wood fire. But I realize it isn't exactly an everyday event to get a camp-



A gas flame is a handy indoor heat source for charring peppers. Turn the peppers with tongs as they blacken.



don't try to reach under the broiler, even with tongs, and run the risk of burning yourself. For the second method, cut off the top and bottom of a pepper, cut a seam in the remaining cylinder, seed it, and unroll the pepper, skin side up, onto a baking sheet.

When the peppers are fully blackened, let them steam. The moment the entire pepper is charred, put it into an airtight container such as a snap-lid tub or a bowl covered with plastic wrap. The peppers will continue to steam, further separating the charred skin from the softened flesh.

Once the peppers are cool enough to handle, put a sieve over a bowl and clean one pepper at a time. As you hold each pepper over the sieve, slip the charred skin from the roasted flesh with your fingers. Once the skin is removed, break the pepper to release the juice and seeds. The sieve will capture the charred skin and seeds and let the juices collect in the bowl below. Store the pepper flesh in its own juices, and be sure to include some of these delicious juices when making sauces and soups.

Use the peppers right away, or freeze them if you like

Roasted peppers are best used soon after they're prepared, although they can be stored in the refrigerator or freezer. Add a few fresh basil leaves before putting them in the refrigerator, covered tightly, where they'll keep for up to a week. You can also freeze roasted peppers, along with their juices (use zip-top freezer bags), for several weeks. The flesh will be slightly less firm when defrosted, which is fine if you're using the peppers for soups or purées, but not ideal for salads or appetizers. Sometimes I take the extra step of turning roasted bell peppers into a coulis first (see p. 42), since this versatile sauce freezes well.

1 Char peppers until totally black using a grill, gas burner, or broiler, as Brian Patterson does here.

fire going, so a backyard grill would be my next choice.

I also roast peppers directly on the grate of either a gas grill cranked up to its highest setting or on the grate of a charcoal grill stocked with hot hardwood embers. I really prefer a charcoal fire fueled with hardwood charcoal, as I think the peppers pick up some of the fire's smoky aroma. Remember, peppers that have been roasted over a less intense flame (such as a low-output gas grill) will be softer since their flesh continues to simmer and cook as the skin takes longer to char and blister. Slow-roasted peppers may also give off more of their juices when you go to peel them.

In the kitchen, peppers can be roasted over the flame of a gas stove or under a broiler. On a gas stove, put the peppers directly on the spider grate over the gas element, and turn the flame to high. The skin should start to crackle and blacken within two minutes. Give the peppers a quarter-turn with tongs as they begin to blister and char.

There are two ways of using a broiler to roast peppers. One method is to simply slide the whole peppers under the heated broiler. Slide the peppers back out to turn them as they blacken;

2 Next, steam the peppers in an airtight container, such as a bowl sealed with plastic wrap.



3 Peel and seed the cooled peppers over a sieve set in a bowl to catch the juices.



Involtini of Roasted Bell Peppers

In Italy, different *involtini* are made by rolling up slices of meat or thin fish fillets with a stuffing. Strips of roasted peppers make terrific *involtini* or "roll-ups," filled with any number of delicious stuffings. Serve *involtini* as an appetizer with a few salad greens, as part of an antipasto, or as a savory side dish to grilled meat, depending on the filling. Served at room temperature, slightly warmed (if you're using a cheese filling, 3 to 5 minutes at 350°F



Roll feta, prosciutto, and basil in a roasted pepper strip to make *involtini*.

will do), or hot (if raw ingredients in the filling need to be baked). Some of my favorite fillings include the following:

- ◆ Thinly sliced prosciutto, a leaf of fresh basil, and a small cube of really good feta or fresh mozzarella
- ◆ A blend of fresh goat cheese, a little Parmesan, and fresh herbs
- ◆ Seasoned mashed potatoes with smoked trout and a dollop of horseradish folded in
- ◆ A thin anchovy fillet and a fat clove of roasted garlic
- ◆ Lump crabmeat mixed with a small bit of *crème fraîche* or cream cheese and fresh herbs (warm through)
- ◆ A stuffing of minced or ground lamb, beef, or chicken, mixed with minced olives, sundried tomatoes, and fresh herbs and bound with cheese, breadcrumbs, or egg (bake at 350°F for 15 for 20 min.)
- ◆ A seafood stuffing of cooked crabmeat bound with a purée of raw scallops, a little heavy cream, salt, and pepper (bake at 350°F for 15 min.)

Roast, peel, and seed several bell peppers. Cut them into strips about 1 to 1½ inches wide (following the natural sections of the pepper, if possible) and 4 to 5 inches long (the length of the pepper). Each pepper will yield 5 or 6 strips. Lay the strips of pepper in a row on a cutting board. Put about ½ to 1 Tbs. of prepared filling at one end of each pepper, roll, and arrange on a baking sheet (lined with parchment or foil, if you like). The *involtini* can be made up to this point an hour or two ahead of time. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to warm or bake, or bring to room temperature and serve raw.

Roasted Bell Pepper Coulis

For variety, try adding a bit of fresh ginger, chopped herbs, or garlic. You can also add a splash of balsamic vinegar, lemon juice, or other acid to heighten the flavor, or a little cream to mellow it. If you strain the coulis, be sure to use a medium- or wide-mesh sieve, as a fine one will cause the coulis to separate. *Yields about 1 cup coulis; double the recipe as needed.*



Purée red and yellow peppers separately to make a two-toned accent for seared scallops, crab cakes, or other seafood.

2 red, yellow, or orange bell peppers, roasted, peeled, seeded, and roughly chopped; juices reserved

½ cup chicken or vegetable stock (low-salt canned is fine); you may not need it all

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a blender, purée the chopped roasted peppers thoroughly. This will take a few minutes and you'll have to pulse the blender on and off several times to purée all the pieces. (Put a towel over the blender and clamp your hand over the lid to prevent leaks.) When the peppers are mostly puréed, begin adding the stock or reserved pepper juices (for a slightly more intense flavor), 1 to 2 Tbs. at a time, to thin the purée. (For a thicker purée, don't add any liquid.) Strain through a wide-mesh sieve, if you like. When you're satisfied with the consistency, season with salt and pepper.

Roasted Red Bell Pepper Soup with Star Anise

I like to serve this soup with a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and a splash of really flavorful vinegar on each serving. It's also delicious served cold, and it can be garnished with a few cooked shrimp, a mound of crabmeat, or a bit of goat cheese. *Yields 9 cups.*

¼ cup olive oil

4 large onions (about 24 oz. total), chopped

4 cloves garlic, chopped

1 cubic inch fresh ginger (about ½ oz.), peeled and chopped

2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped (about 4 oz. chopped)

2 qt. chicken stock (low-salt canned is fine)

7 red bell peppers, roasted, peeled, and seeded; juices reserved

Roasted peppers to the rescue

Roasted peppers can add verve and body to many quick-to-make dishes.

◆ Roasted peppers are essential to an antipasto platter. Slice the peppers into thin or thick strips and toss them in a bowl with some

of their own juice, a little extra-virgin olive oil, roasted or minced fresh garlic, salt, pepper, and a little grated Parmesan or slivered fresh basil. Let sit at room temperature for half an hour before serving.

◆ Toss a julienne of roasted peppers in a cool pasta dish, or use them as a garnish for a hot pasta.

◆ Dress a green salad with

chopped roasted peppers, grilled corn kernels, pine nuts, olive oil, and balsamic vinegar.

◆ Combine chopped roasted peppers with softened goat cheese, fresh thyme, and a few breadcrumbs to make a stuffing for chicken breasts or a crostini topping.

◆ In a processor, purée roasted peppers with



The unctuous quality of a really good olive oil is the perfect partner for this slightly spicy roasted red pepper soup.

2 pods (or 1½ tsp. broken pieces) star anise
1 tsp. salt; more to taste
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste
Pinch cayenne
12 leaves fresh basil
Extra-virgin olive oil and sherry vinegar (optional)

Heat the ¼ cup olive oil in a 6-qt. soup pot over medium heat. Add the onions, garlic, ginger, and carrots and sauté until very soft but not browned, 20 to 25 min.

Add the stock and turn the heat to high. Add the roasted peppers and any reserved juices, as well as the star anise, salt, pepper, and cayenne. As soon as the mixture comes to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer uncovered for 30 min. Stir occasionally.

Purée the soup 2 cups at a time in a blender, with all the basil leaves going in the blender along with the first 2 cups of soup. Purée each batch of soup in the blender for at least 1 min. Combine all the puréed soup in one container, taste, and add more salt and pepper to bring all the flavors into balance. (For a thinner soup, strain through a wide-mesh sieve.) Serve with a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and a splash of sherry vinegar.

Spanish Style Roasted Red Pepper Salad with Grilled Tuna

In the Rioja region of Spain, where the native piquillo peppers are often roasted over an open fire, there are many variations on this salad, depending on the hand of the cook or the cook's mother. My Spanish friends helped me design this version, which you might find served at a family lunch. You can substitute best-quality canned tuna, if you like. *Serves four.*

5 red bell peppers, roasted, peeled, and seeded; juices reserved
1 lb. fresh tuna
¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Cayenne
3 medium Yukon Gold potatoes (6 to 8 oz. each)
3 or 4 large eggs
6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced lengthwise
⅓ cup fresh lemon juice
36 kalamata olives, pitted
2 ribs celery, sliced
1 bunch arugula (about 6 oz.) or fresh spinach
4 scallions, thinly sliced on the bias

Slice the peppers into thick strips and reserve them in a bowl with any juices. Light a



A lemon-garlic vinaigrette brings together this Spanish composed salad of roasted peppers, grilled tuna, and potatoes.

charcoal or gas grill or heat a cast-iron skillet to high. Lightly coat the fresh tuna on all sides with a little of the olive oil, season with salt, pepper, and very little cayenne, and grill it over a hot flame to a medium doneness (just a trace of pink in the center when sliced). Set aside.

Peel the potatoes, cut them into quarters, and put them in a medium pot with cold water to cover. Add 1 Tbs. salt and bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as the potatoes come to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer until they're just tender, 10 to 12 min. Drain, run under cold water, and cut each quarter in half. Reserve.

Put the eggs in a small pot, cover with cold water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Once boiling, reduce the heat to a hard simmer and cook for 8 min. Remove from the heat, drain, and chill in ice water. Once cooled, peel the eggs and reserve.

In a sauté pan, heat the rest of the oil with the garlic over low heat until the garlic is golden, 10 to 12 min. Let cool for 10 min., strain out the garlic, and reserve the oil and garlic separately.

Stir the lemon juice into the garlic-flavored oil and add ½ tsp. salt, pepper, and a pinch of cayenne; set aside.

Slice the tuna into bite-size pieces and put in a bowl. Add the potatoes, olives, and celery and mix gently. Add 3 to 4 Tbs. of the garlic dressing and toss. Season with salt, pepper, and a pinch of cayenne. Toss 3 Tbs. of the dressing with the pepper slices, and another 3 to 4 Tbs. of the dressing with the arugula. Reserve any extra dressing to drizzle on the completed salad, if you like.

To serve the salad, arrange the greens on a shallow platter, mound the tuna-potato mixture in the middle, and arrange the roasted red pepper slices around that. Cut the hard-boiled eggs into wedges and arrange them around the perimeter. Sprinkle the garlic slivers and the sliced scallions over all.

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grated Parmesan, pine nuts, roasted garlic, olive oil, and basil to make a roasted pepper pesto.

♦ Make my favorite summer sandwich: layer roasted peppers, a bit of olive tapenade, arugula, slices of crisp cooked pancetta, and some fresh mozzarella between slices of crusty Italian bread.

Potatoes on the Grill,



Keep your tongs and lid ready so you can control the grill's temperature. Susie Middleton keeps these potatoes covered to create an oven-like heat.

Choose from three techniques; each offers a slightly different result, but all have that terrific grilled flavor

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

Our neighbors think we're a little crazy. Night and day, rain or shine, smoke wafts from our backyard. "The Middletons," they say, "are grilling again." We like to grill so much that it's not uncommon for us to cook an entire meal on the grill. We have our favorite meats (pork tenderloin, skirt steak, marinated chicken breasts, shrimp kababs) and our favorite vegetables (thick slabs of red onion, juicy ears of corn, big, meaty asparagus spears, red, yellow, and orange bell peppers cut in half). And then, to round out the meal, we grill red potatoes, or Yukon Golds, or even Idahoes, using a few different methods we've learned to rely on.

At first, it might seem tricky to grill a potato successfully, but fortunately potatoes are incredibly accommodating. The delicious flavor and texture of a grilled potato is a great reward for learning to manage one tiny problem: getting the potato cooked on the inside before it burns on the outside.

To be sure that you've got a grilled potato that's cooked through, follow one of the methods I've detailed in the technique and recipe sections that follow. Once you've chosen your method, you'll have just three more quick decisions to make: what kind of potato to use, what shape to cut it in, and how to season it. Try the suggested methods that follow (actual recipes for each method begin on p. 47), and soon you'll be perfecting your own versions of delicious grilled potatoes—as habit-forming as the best mashed or roasted.

As You Like Them

Technique #1 — Par-cook potatoes before grilling for better control

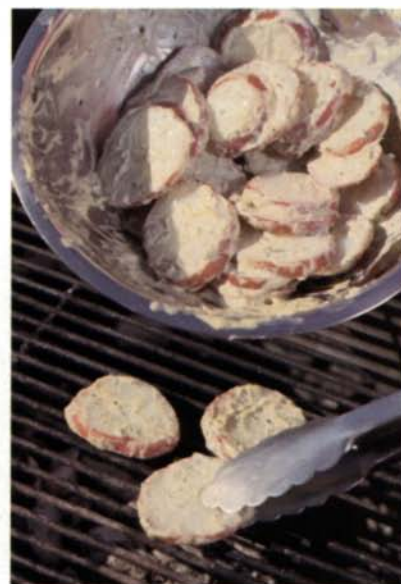
It may seem like extra work, but I like to partially cook (by simmering) most potatoes before grilling them. Here's why: First, this method cuts down on the final cooking time on the grill, so I can put the potatoes on just as I'm finishing up with the meat or corn or whatever else I've been grilling. Since the potatoes are already cooked most of the way through, they only need to be seared over direct heat to create a golden brown crust. I'm mostly looking for visual clues to see when the potatoes are done, so I don't have to pay as much attention to timing them or to moving them to indirect heat to finish cooking. I also don't have to cover the grill to ensure that the potatoes cook all the way through, so I can be grilling a steak at the same time. If I'm entertaining, I can hand off the grilling to someone else, knowing they just have to look at the potatoes to know when they're done.

I especially like to precook dense-fleshed potatoes like Red Bliss and Yukon Gold before grilling them. Using a wet-heat method to cook these potatoes before exposing them to the dry heat of the grill means they have almost the texture of french fries by the time they're done: golden on the outside, fluffy and cakey on the inside.

I always cut the potatoes before I simmer them (I like slices, but quarters and wedges work, too), and I let them drain well after simmering. I can do this ahead of time and leave them at room temperature while fixing the rest of dinner. Then, I coat the potatoes well with either oil and herbs or a combination of a little bit of mayonnaise and mustard, since the fats help keep the moisture inside the potatoes when they hit the grill, and also help to keep the tender flesh from sticking. While I think it works best to season your potatoes before you grill them, that doesn't mean you can't season them afterward, too, or use them in other recipes, like the salad I've suggested on p. 48.



Simmer potato slices gently until just shy of fully cooked.



Add a simple coating of mustard and mayonnaise to keep the potatoes moist.



Serve these savory slices hot off the grill. The interior texture of par-cooked potatoes is almost fluffy, like a french fry.



Start raw Idaho “fries” over direct heat and then move them to indirect heat for a slow, thorough finish.



Technique #2 — Cook potatoes from start to finish on the grill

If you don't want to bother precooking your potatoes, you don't have to. You can cook them start-to-finish on the grill by using a combination of direct and indirect cooking. When building your charcoal fire, be sure to bank the coals to one side so that you'll have a hotter side and a cooler side. On a gas grill, heat one side of the grill to medium high; keep the other side on medium low. When planning what else you might want to cook on the grill you'll need to keep in mind that you'll be covering the grill, and using it for a little longer when cooking potatoes this way.

I like this method for wedges of Idaho potatoes. When they sear on the hot grill, their starch seems to seal in their inherent moisture, and the result is crispy outside and flaky

inside. I don't like this method quite as well for red and yellow potatoes, unless I'm planning to use them in a salad (see the recipe on p. 48) when they come off the grill. Their slightly dry texture and charry flavor works well when dressed up with a vinaigrette and served on leafy greens.

Seasoning potatoes for the grill

Use the seasoning mixes below to flavor 1 pound of potatoes before they go on the grill (12 to 14 baby potatoes, 6 medium red- or yellow-skinned potatoes, 2 large red- or yellow-skinned potatoes, or 2 small Idahoes make a pound). Cut baby potatoes in half, others into $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch slices or wedges or quarters. If par-cooking potatoes (see technique #1, p. 45), season them after simmering and cooling but before they go on the grill.

General seasonings
Extra-Virgin Olive Oil & Fresh Herbs: Toss the potatoes with enough olive oil to coat well (2 to 3 Tbs.) and

season with coarse salt, freshly ground pepper or a few hot red pepper flakes, and 2 to 3 tsp. chopped hardy herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, or sage.

Mustard, Mayonnaise, & Herbs: Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise with 2 Tbs. Dijon mustard and 2 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary. Coat the potatoes with this mixture and season with salt and pepper.

Mustard & Olive Oil: Combine 3 Tbs. olive oil with $1\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. savory mustard and toss together with potatoes. Or replace the mustard with 1 Tbs. black olive tapenade or sun-

dried-tomato pesto. Season well with salt and pepper.

Spicy “Dipping” Oil: Dip small potato halves or wedges in hot chile oil (use about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) and then into a combination of fine sea salt and sugar (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each).

Dry Spice Rub: Coat the potatoes well with 2 to 3 Tbs. olive oil and then sprinkle your favorite dried spice rub over all the cut edges. Be sure to include a lot of salt in the spice rub. A good rub recipe: combine about $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each of ground cumin, coriander, paprika, chili powder, allspice,

freshly ground black pepper, and dried thyme with about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt and a little sugar, if you like.

Seasonings and ingredients for foil-wrapped potatoes:

Combine 10 oz. potatoes with 4 oz. cremini or baby bella mushrooms (quartered), 1 small onion cut into chunks, 8 large cloves garlic (quartered), 1 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary, $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. red pepper flakes, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil. For variations, include cooked bacon or diced ham, replace the garlic with shallots, or use sage instead of rosemary. Add lemon slices, too.

Technique #3 — Wrap potatoes in foil to keep them moist and to blend flavors

One of the easiest and most delicious ways to cook potatoes on the grill is to toss them with a lot of the same goodies you might use for roasted potatoes and wrap them tightly in foil. Put the package on the grate directly over the heat, cover the grill, and in 40 minutes you have a delicious side dish.

Grilled this way, the potatoes steam to a moist but firm texture and bathe in the juices of roasting aromatics. Garlic, onions, and peppers practically melt into the potatoes for extra flavor. And if your coals are hot enough, the potatoes closest to the outside of the package will have nicely charred edges, too. The package can sit off the grill, unopened, for up to 15 minutes, while you grill the main course.

A few things to keep in mind: First, before wrapping the potatoes in the foil, spread them out so that the pile is an even thickness, about 1½ inches deep. This will let more potatoes come in close contact with the heat of the fire,



Make a foil package for a savory potato-vegetable mix.

ensuring even cooking. Second, mound the coals so that they're 5 to 6 inches below the center of the grate (but no closer). Then set the package directly over the hottest spot. Ideally, the potatoes on the bottom will be just beginning to char when they're flipped after 20 minutes. Last, be sure to cover the



Garlic and onions "melt" for more flavor.

grill completely (leave the top and bottom vents open) so the potatoes bake in the oven-like atmosphere. You can cook foil-wrapped potatoes on a gas grill, too, but you may have to cook them longer (or heat the grill to high).

When you first try this method, you might want to use slightly shorter cooking times and check the potatoes (unfold the foil with tongs; the steam will be hot enough to burn). If they aren't quite done, rewrap them and grill for a few more minutes. If they're too charred but not done in the middle, put them back on, away from the coals, and cover the grill.

RECIPES

Grilled Potatoes #1 (with a little precooking)

By par-cooking your potatoes before they go on the grill, they'll have a soft, almost cakey texture on the inside when they're done, but they'll still have that terrific grilled flavor. However you choose to season the potatoes (see the sidebar at left), be sure to include some kind of fat and salt. *Serves four as a side dish.*

1 lb. potatoes

Your choice of seasonings (see the sidebar at left)

Wash and cut the potatoes. I like to cut red- and yellow-skinned potatoes into ¾-inch slices, as they par-cook a little more evenly, but wedges or quarters certainly work too. For Idaho "fries," cut small Idahoes into six wedges, lengthwise. Cover the potatoes with cold water and 1 Tbs. salt per pound of potatoes in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, lower to a *gentle* simmer (you don't want them to break up), and cook until they're almost but not quite fully cooked, 4 to 6 min.

The potatoes will still be a little hard in the center, but the outer edges will look opaque. Drain in a large colander and rinse with cold water until they're cool; handle them gently. Spread them out on clean dish-towels and let them sit at room temperature (for up to an hour) until you're ready to grill them.

Light a charcoal grill and allow the fire to reach a medium-hot temperature (the top of the coals should be 5 to 6 inches from the grill grate, and you'll be able to hold your hand over the fire for no more than 3 to 4 seconds when it's medium hot). Alternatively, heat the entire surface of a gas grill until it reaches medium hot. Toss the potato pieces with the desired seasoning, making sure that all the pieces are coated well. Put the potatoes, cut side down, on the grill grate in one layer, directly over the coals. Cook for 3 to 6 min. or just until deep golden brown and crisp. With tongs, turn the pieces over (to the other side, if you're using slices, to the other cut side if you're using wedges, and to the skin side if you're using halves). Cook until that side is deep golden brown and crisp, another 3 to 6 min. Remove and serve immediately.

(More recipes follow)

Grilled Potatoes #2 (no precooking)

Potatoes cooked entirely on the grill are slightly drier but firmer than those that are par-cooked first. They'll also be a bit crisper, though all grilled potatoes lose crispness as they cool. *Serves four as a side dish.*

1 lb. potatoes

Your choice of seasonings (see the sidebar on p. 46)

Light a charcoal grill. When the coals are hot, bank them to one side of the grill so that you have a hotter side and a cooler side. (The coals should be 5 to 6 inches from the grate on the hotter side.) On a gas grill, heat one side to medium high or high and the other side to low. Cut the potatoes into three-sided wedges (quarter small red potatoes, cut baby potatoes in half, and cut Idahoes into lengthwise "fries.") Season and coat the potatoes well and put them on the grate, cut side down, directly over the hottest part of the fire. Partially cover the grill, making sure the bottom vents are open (if using a charcoal grill). Cook the potatoes until deep reddish-golden brown, 4 to 6 min., and turn them over onto their other cut side. Partially cover and grill until nicely colored, another 4 to 6 min. Move the potatoes to the cooler side of the grill, flipping them so they're skin side down. Partially cover and grill until tender when pierced with a sharp knife, about another 6 min. Serve immediately or use them in a salad (see the recipe at right).



Don't stop with potatoes: grill onions and corn, too, for terrific salad ingredients.

Grilled Potatoes #3 (in a foil package)

These potatoes have a very moist texture, and they pick up an intense aroma and flavor from the vegetables you cook with them. I usually include onions and garlic, but you can use whatever you like. For one foil package, use 10 to 12 oz. potatoes and about 8 oz. of other ingredients. To cook more, assemble more packages rather than making a bigger package. *Serves two to three as a side dish.*



Make a main-dish salad on the grill. Toss grilled potatoes, corn, and onions with smoked or grilled fish; serve on a bed of arugula.

10 oz. red potatoes, cut into 1-inch chunks

Seasonings and other ingredients (see the sidebar on p. 46)

Light a charcoal or gas fire. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Meanwhile, measure out three 20-inch-long sheets of 12-inch-wide foil and overlap two of them in a cross pattern. Mound the potato mixture in the middle of the cross and spread it out into a square that's about 1½ inches deep all around. Fold the ends of the foil in and wrap the package tightly. Wrap the third piece of foil around the package to seal.

When the grill is medium hot, put the package on the grate directly over the hottest part. Cover the grill, making sure that the top and bottom vents are open (if using a charcoal grill). Cook for 20 min. Using tongs, turn the package over and cook for another 20 min. If your fire is very hot, shorten the cooking times by a couple of minutes on both sides. If it's cooler, lengthen the total cooking time to 45 to 50 min. Open the package carefully with tongs; the steam will be very hot. The potatoes are done when they feel tender when pierced and some are deep brown and charred. Kept wrapped, they'll stay warm off the grill for 15 to 20 min.

Grilled Potato, Corn & Red Onion Salad over Arugula

You can use grilled potatoes in any kind of salad, but they're especially good mixed with other grilled vegetables like onion and corn, dressed in a tangy vinaigrette, and served over toothy greens like arugula or frisée. *Serves two as a main dish.*

FOR THE SALAD:

1 lb. red-skinned or yellow-fleshed potatoes, grilled by technique #1 or #2

2 small ears corn, grilled by your favorite method

1 small red onion, thickly sliced and grilled until tender

2 Tbs. minced, drained oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes

4 oz. smoked whitefish or smoked trout, flaked into small pieces

2 oz. arugula (tough lower stalks removed)

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

1 Tbs. white-wine vinegar

1 tsp. Dijon mustard

1 tsp. sugar

¼ tsp. kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

½ Tbs. chopped fresh herbs (optional)

While the potatoes are still warm, combine them with the corn, onion, sun-dried tomatoes, and smoked fish. Make the vinaigrette by whisking together the vinegar, mustard, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl and slowly whisking in the oil; add herbs, if you like. Toss the arugula with a little less than 1 Tbs. of the dressing to coat it lightly. Mound it on two plates or in two soup bowls. Toss the potato mixture with 2 to 3 Tbs. of the dressing and arrange on the arugula. Drizzle on any leftover dressing if you like.

Susie Middleton is the managing editor of Fine Cooking. ♦

Choosing the Right Food Mill

Look for a roomy bowl, sturdy construction, interchangeable disks, and a blade that rides close to the mill bottom

BY AMY ALBERT

A food mill is a sieve with muscle. No other tool can mash and strain soft chunks of food more neatly and less strenuously, all at one time. While a 20-year-old hardware-store mill has served me pretty well, some of the bigger, sturdier models I've seen made me wonder if it's time for an upgrade. With this in mind, I put a bunch of food mills through their paces, from a 2-quart plastic model to a professional-size mill three times that size.

Mash and strain in one fell swoop

A food mill purées soft food while it strains fiber, seeds, and skin. It may not be as versatile as a blender or a food processor, but for certain jobs, a food mill works more efficiently than pulsing in a food processor and then forcing through a strainer. Abby Dodge, *Fine Cooking's* test kitchen director, loves how a food mill makes quick work of berry purées. "Sometimes a few seeds will

Moulinex's low-cost plastic mill performed surprisingly well.





Rösle is the Cadillac of home food mills, with a roomy work-bowl and sturdy construction.



The Vigano mill comes with two sieve disks and has rubber-cushioned hooks that fold in for easy, neat storage.



If you often cook for a crowd, Moulinex's 14-inch professional-size mill might be worth the investment.

sneak through the mill," she admits, "but for anything more than half a cup, why do it any differently?"

"I wouldn't be without one," says Seen Lippert, a chef and restaurant consultant, who uses a food mill for garlic mashed potatoes, vegetable purées, and soups. "A lot of chefs tend to go right to a monster blender," says Seen, but food mills give an airy texture that a blender or a potato masher just can't deliver. "Skip the cheap models or that cute vintage one at the flea market," she advises. "Get a big one."

Molly Stevens, a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*, uses a food mill for home-style dishes like potato soups, tomato sauce, and applesauce. She points out, though, that the results from even the finest blade of a food mill will be "a few steps short of the ultra-velvety classic French *velouté* texture you get with a fine-mesh sieve."

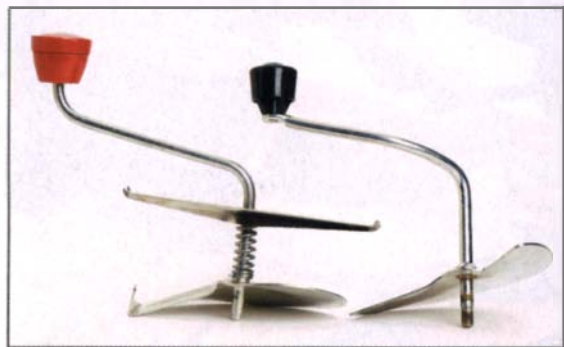
Here's what to look for

Most food mills have basically the same features, but there's some difference in the way they perform.

♦ **A handle and hooks or loops for hooking onto a bowl.** These let the mill perch on or hang inside a bowl so milled food falls into the bowl, not onto the counter. Configurations vary. All the models I tried jostled a bit as I cranked; even so, make sure the mill can perch fairly securely on a stockpot or bowl.

♦ **Interchangeable disks.** From the \$15 Mouli to the \$160 Rösle, most come with these. If you plan to use a mill for more than just mashed potatoes, you'll want a choice of gauges for varying degrees of fineness.

♦ **Capacity.** A deep, generously sized food mill is helpful in a couple of ways. It lets you finish the job in



A shallow-angled blade (left) pushes the food through the mill instead of sweeping it around, as more sharply angled blades do (right).

one or two passes instead of in small batches, and food is less likely to fall out of the mill. Plus, bigger food mills save you dishwashing: drain a whole pot of boiled potatoes right into a big-capacity mill, purée the potatoes back into the boiling pot, and you've saved washing a colander and a holding bowl. Go for at least 2 quarts; 3 is even better.

◆ **A blade that rides close to the disk.** The least effective models I tried swirled the food around the mill rather than grabbing it and forcing it through. This was due to a sharply sloped blade, whose high angle allowed for more space between the blade and the disk. The extra clearance causes food to be swept around the mill rather than pushed through the disk. Look for a gently sloped blade that rides close to the sieve disk.

◆ **"Grab."** On some models, the disk perforations are stamped from the outside so the resulting protruding edges are on the inside of the mill. These edges grab the food so the blade can push it through the sieve, rather than sweeping it around the bowl. On more expensive home versions, the disk perforations' edges are polished, but the edge of the blade is angled down about ¼ inch, which helps grab the food chunks and push them through more easily.

◆ **Easy assembly.** The mill should be easy to take apart for cleaning and easy to reassemble.

There's good value in all price ranges

Food mills vary in price from \$15 to \$200.

Low-priced models cost from \$15 to \$35, and many work quite well; they're made of aluminum, tinned steel, or plastic, instead of top-quality stainless steel. Of those I tested, the only disappointment was a \$30 2-quart steel mill by Foley that's a flimsy update of my sturdier old tinned model; it chased strawberries round and round until I had to press with my fingers to get the milling started. Instead, plunk down \$5 more on the similarly sized European Vigano (see photo, p. 50). Here's the surprise: Moulinex's \$15 and \$25 1- and 2-quart plastic versions did just as good a job on mashed potatoes and black-



berry purée as did their pricier metal siblings. If you want a food mill but think you'd use it only occasionally, the 2-quart plastic Moulinex would be money well spent.

High-priced mills ring in at about \$160 to \$200. What the extra money buys you is sleek design and heavy, stainless-steel construction. Rösle makes a sturdy, great-looking food mill. The 3½-quart workbowl is deep and spacious, the blade cranks smoothly and efficiently, and the mill is easy to take apart. It comes with one disk; additional disks cost \$40 each.

For high-volume or professional cooking (canning your own applesauce or tomato sauce, filling large orders of sweet potato pie at holiday time, turning out dinner for 100 with celery root purée as a side dish), there's a hefty, professional French mill that's three times the capacity of the others (and costs about \$200). I couldn't resist calling it Big Bertha: the thing milled five very large whole roasted sweet potatoes in six seconds flat. It's a bit ungainly and wouldn't perch on a big stainless-steel mixing bowl (whose rim was too wide for the mill's hooks), but it did hook nicely onto my 8-quart stockpot.

So what about that upgrade? The mill I'd choose is priced smack in the middle. Made by Cuispro, it costs about \$85 and performs just as well as Rösle's roomy, sleek, similarly sized mill—for about half the price. The Cuispro cranks smoothly, its sturdy blade rides close to the disk, and the mill's capacious, rounded workbowl holds several pounds of potatoes, which it milled quite easily.

For where to buy, see Sources, p. 84.

Browne & Company's Cuispro costs a bit more than the hardware store brands, but it's a great value.



These potatoes have been through the mill, and consequently, they're silky-smooth.

Amy Albert is an associate editor for Fine Cooking. ♦



Like any other seasoning, the right wine added at the right time helps flavors come together—and adds new ones, too.



White wine adds brightness to mussels. The mussels' briny-sweet liquor mingles with the wine to make a broth that's ideal for bread-dunking.

Cooking with Wine

Use an inexpensive bottle to deglaze, reduce, steam, or macerate—correctly and deliciously

BY BRIAN STREETER

I open a fair bit of wine at home—for pleasure, and also because I'm the chef at Cakebread Cellars in California's Napa Valley, where creating recipes to go with wine is part of my job. There's often leftover wine sitting in my fridge: stuff that's too good to waste but no longer terrific for drinking. But rather than let those stoppered bottles fade into refrigerator oblivion, I use them to cook with. For the nights I don't have leftover wine on hand, I've always got a few inexpensive but decent bottles in my pantry.

Wine brings out flavors in all kinds of dishes, and once you know a few ground rules about how and when to add it, you'll find yourself reaching for a little wine the way you would lemon juice or good vinegar.

The recipes on pp. 54–55 are simple, delicious examples of some of my favorite ways to use wine in cooking: to enrich the steaming broth for a pot of mussels, to make a pan sauce for seared steak, to flavor a slow-cooking onion jam, or to soak some strawberries for a quick and easy dessert.

Wine is a delicious flavoring, but the alcohol needs taming

One of the main reasons to cook with wine is to add acidity to a dish, which in turn brings out other flavors. But because wine also contains alcohol, you usually add it at the start of cooking so the alcohol has a chance to burn off. Splashing wine into a dish at the end of cooking usually results in an unpleasant raw-wine taste. And warm temperatures accentuate acidity and alcohol (if you've ever tasted wine that was served too warm, you'll know what I mean), which makes it even trickier to use wine well. Nor are all wines right for all foods; a very tannic red, for example, would turn chalky in a pan-sauce reduction. Learning how to handle wine and heat, as well as learning which wines work best in cooking, opens up loads of new cooking possibilities.

If you wouldn't drink it, don't cook with it. The first thing to know about cooking with wine is that heat won't improve the undesirable qualities of bad wine: it will accentuate them. Cook with something you wouldn't mind drinking (for tasty bargains, see Sources, p. 84), whose flavors, ideally, tie in with the wine that you're actually drinking with the meal. Conversely, heat kills the subtle nuances in complex wine, so save that 1985 single-vineyard Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon for drinking. If you want to use the leftovers from a special bottle, fine, but be aware that the subtle flavors you tasted in the glass won't survive cooking.

Young wines with lively fruit notes add the best flavor

When you cook with wine, you're concentrating the wine flavors and evaporating most of the alcohol. (The longer the cooking, the more alcohol gets evap-

orated, but according to food scientist Shirley Corriher, even after 2½ hours of simmering, some alcohol does remain in food.)

Whether you're using red, white, or rosé, young wines with bright fruit notes work best.

Use dry white wines with higher acidity. These are also known in wine parlance as "crisp." Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Sémillon, and dry sparkling wines are especially good because of their bright citrus and green apple notes. Fuller whites with strong, oaky flavors, like some Chardonnays, don't work as well for cooking. They're lower in acidity and don't lend as much punch as crisper wines. When reduced, oaky, buttery flavors turn bitter and don't add anything pleasant to a dish.

White wine is a pantry staple for most cooks, and it's really versatile. Use it to deglaze the brown bits for a pan sauce for sautéed fish, chicken, pork, or mushrooms. Use it in risotto for a good touch of acidity. Add it to a pot of shellfish just before you put the lid on for steaming. Pour a splash into a court bouillon for steeping salmon, bass, or flounder.

Use dry red wines with moderate tannins. Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sangiovese (the main grape in Chianti), and lighter-style Cabernet are all good. As with white wines, the acidity will punch up other flavors in



Tannins get softened by sweet onions. Onion Jam with Cabernet calls for a young red.



Smear the onion jam on a slice of country bread. Or try it on steak, over polenta, or as a pizza topping.



These browned bits get deglazed with some red wine...

...to make a delicious pan sauce for Filet of Beef with Blue Cheese, Rosemary & Pine Nuts.



When to add the wine

To get the best flavor and to make sure the alcohol is cooked off, here's when to add the wine:

♦ **For stews, braises, or long-simmering tomato sauces,** add wine early in the simmering stage, after you've browned the meat and vegetables. Let the wine reduce a bit and then add the other liquids. Some cooks add a small dash of red wine near the end of cooking to deepen a slow-simmering tomato ragù, but only if the wine is top-flight.

♦ **For pan sauces,** add the wine after you've set the meat aside to rest. Reduce the wine to a syrupy consistency, scraping up any browned bits. Add any other liquid, such as cream or

stock, and reduce again. Whisk in a tablespoon or two of butter, if you like.

♦ **For marinades,** add the wine with all the other marinade ingredients. The marinade can also be used as the base for a sauce. Make sure the sauce is brought to a boil and cooked down thoroughly.

♦ **In risotto,** add the wine after the onions are soft and the rice has been added and lightly toasted in the butter. Make sure the wine is almost completely cooked off before you start adding broth.

♦ **For a sauté of shrimp or scallops,** add the wine after the initial searing but before the fish is cooked through, so there's time for the wine to reduce.

the dish. A young red's berry-like, red-fruit flavors add depth and zing, provided there's not too much tannin or oak to overshadow those flavors. Be aware that very full-bodied reds—big Cabernets, Syrahs, Barolos—that contain big tannins can leave an almost chalky taste when the wine is reduced.

Add red wine to slow-cooking stews or tomato sauces. Use it for pan sauces for seared lamb, duck, chicken, or beef. You can even use red wine for flavoring desserts; I'll get to that in a moment.

Use raw wine, but prudently

You can't usually add wine to a dish without cooking it down. That said, there are a couple of exceptions.

Raw wine works best in cold preparations, where the chill softens the alcohol's edge. The Strawberries in Red Wine at right works because the dish is served cold, and because the sugar and berry juices soften the wine. Raw wines work well in marinades, too, of course, where the marinade can then be used as the base for a cooked sauce.

Sweet wines should rarely be cooked: the sugars will intensify, and those lovely perfumy nuances will be killed. A dash of Sauternes, late-harvest Riesling, or other sweet wine can be a delicious flavoring for custard sauces, sorbets, and even fruit salads. When you're cooking with sweet wine, add it toward the end of cooking to preserve its subtleties.

A final word: skip the "cooking wine" you see on supermarket shelves. It contains salt, it tastes terrible, and a bottle of drinkable wine is only a few dollars more. And if you only use a quarter of a bottle of nice wine, think of the delicious leftovers you'll have.

RECIPES

Filet of Beef with Blue Cheese, Rosemary & Pine Nut Sauce

This recipe gives you the chance to use up some hearty red wine: the beef and blue cheese help to soften the tannins in those kinds of reds. *Serves two.*

- 1 Tbs. vegetable oil**
- 2 filets mignons (5 to 6 oz. each), lightly pounded to about ¾ inch thick, seasoned with salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter**
- 2 shallots, minced**
- ¾ cup full-bodied red wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon**
- ¾ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock**
- 1 Tbs. fresh rosemary, chopped**
- 2 Tbs. crumbled blue cheese**
- 2 Tbs. pine nuts, toasted and chopped**

In a medium, nonreactive skillet, heat the oil over high heat. When the oil is hot, sear the meat on both sides until well browned, about 3 min. per side for medium rare. Transfer the meat to a platter and tent it with foil to keep warm. Pour the excess oil out of the

pan, making sure to hold back the cooked-on juices and browned bits. Reduce the heat to medium high and add the butter. When the butter is melted, add the shallots, sautéing until softened, about 1 min. Add the wine and cook at a vigorous simmer, scraping up the browned bits with a wooden spoon and reducing until the liquid is very syrupy. Add the stock and rosemary; continue boiling until the liquid is reduced by half. Remove from the heat. Stir in the blue cheese, along with any juices that have run off the meat; the cheese should melt just slightly. Spoon the sauce over the meat, garnish with the chopped pine nuts, and serve.

Cabernet Onion Jam

The sweetness of the onions softens the tannins in young Cabernet. The jam is great over grilled polenta, on a steak, as a pizza topping with Gorgonzola, or smeared on a slice of peasant bread. It keeps for two weeks sealed and refrigerated. *Yields about 1 cup.*

2 Tbs. olive oil

4 medium onions, peeled, halved, and thinly sliced
1 tsp. salt

1 cup full-bodied red wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon; more as needed

In a large, straight-sided sauté pan, warm the oil over medium-low heat. Add the onions and salt. Cover and cook until the onions are soft, about 20 min., stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add the wine, making sure it covers the onions, and cook uncovered at a very gentle simmer until all liquid has evaporated and the onions are thick and jamlike, about 2 hours, stirring frequently during the last half hour.

Mussels with White Wine

This is one of my favorite summer meals. Be sure to serve the mussels in bowls, with plenty of French bread to sop up the broth. Enjoy these with a crisp white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc or Sémillon. *Serves two as a main course, four as an appetizer.*



Fresh berries need a young red that's light on tannins. The sugar and berry juices will soften the raw wine's edge.

¼ cup olive oil

2 Tbs. minced shallots

1 Tbs. minced garlic

1 cup crisp, dry white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc

3 lb. mussels, scrubbed and debearded

2 Tbs. minced fresh flat-leaf parsley

In a large pot with a tight-fitting lid, warm the olive oil over medium heat. Add the shallots and garlic. Sauté until soft, making sure they don't color, about 2 min. Raise the heat to high, add the white wine, and bring it to a boil. Add the mussels, cover the pot, and steam until the shells open, 5 to 9 min., stirring once or twice during cooking. Take care not to overcook, and be sure to discard any mussels that haven't opened. Add the parsley, ladle the mussels and the broth into serving bowls, and serve at once.

Strawberries in Red Wine

For macerating strawberries, pick a red wine with ripe berry flavors. At the winery, we serve these with polenta cheesecake, but they're just as good topped with sweetened whipped cream, spooned over vanilla ice cream, or just served with a crisp cookie. *Yields 4 cups.*

2 pints strawberries, rinsed, stemmed, and sliced
¼ inch thick

¼ cup sugar; more as needed

1 cup dry, fruity red wine, such as a light-bodied Zinfandel or Sangiovese

In a deep, nonreactive bowl, toss the strawberries with the sugar. If the berries are hard and not very sweet, you may need to add a little more sugar. Add the wine, making sure the berries are covered. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let the berries sit at room temperature for at least 1 hour but no longer than 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Spoon the berries and juices into shallow bowls and serve.

Brian Streeter is the chef at Cakebread Cellars in Rutherford, California. ♦



Adding wine to food is not an exact science. It's easy to "eyeball" and tell what portion of the bottle is a cup or a half cup.



Strawberries with Red Wine is a delicious topper for vanilla ice cream.

Fresh Fruit Gratins

Keep the fruit the star, but add an easy sabayon topping and then brown it under the broiler

BY RANDALL PRICE

For me, the abundance of fresh fruit in summer is a mixed blessing. Sure, perfectly ripe fruit is a joy to cook with, but there comes a point where even perfection becomes repetitious. At the place where I cook (a private château in France), many of the guests stay for days, so I'm always looking for new dessert ideas in order to not repeat myself. But there are only so many tarts, crumbles, buckles, short-cakes, cold soups, and fruit cocktails that I can serve. A fruit gratin—fresh fruit topped with a type of sabayon and browned under the broiler—is a handy addition to my arsenal of summer desserts, and even though it's a cinch to make, it's always a hit.

A topping as delectable as sabayon, but not nearly as finicky

The sabayon topping that I've developed is inspired by the classic French sabayon: a frothy concoction of egg yolks, sugar, and sweet wine that's tediously whipped over a hot water bath and has to be served immediately. A sabayon is delicious, but frankly, it asks too much of my time and attention. And it can be tricky, curdling easily because the egg yolks are unprotected by any starch.

My "cheater's" version of sabayon comes from a gratinéed plum tart that I learned to make from Chef Chambrette at La Varenne cooking school. Instead of using just yolks, sugar, and flavorings, I make a pastry cream (yolks, sugar, a little cornstarch, and milk), and then I add another egg yolk to make it richer and to make it brown better than pastry cream. And since plain pastry cream can be a tad bland and gluey, I spike it with some flavorful alcohol like an eau de vie or a sweet wine and then lighten the whole thing with whipped cream.

The billowy topping that results is every bit as delicate as a sabayon but much easier to work with.



Careful folding produces the best texture. Try to keep the cream billowy; don't worry if you end up with a few tiny lumps of pastry cream.

The pastry cream base can be made a day ahead and refrigerated. I can arrange the fruit in a large gratin dish (or in individual dishes—it's really pretty that way), nap the fruit with the sauce, sit down and enjoy the meal, and then pop the dish into the oven for a quick browning right before I serve it for dessert.

The fruit keeps its fresh, uncooked character

One of the nice things about this gratin is that you don't need to tamper with the fruit—I leave berries whole, and I simply cut other fruits into bite-size pieces.

You can make a fruit gratin with most fruits, though really watery types, such as melons, don't do well. My favorites are berries, stone fruits (like peaches and apricots), cherries, and fresh figs. Apples and pears work, but you need to poach them briefly in sweetened wine or simple syrup to soften them. Do choose fruit that's at its peak of flavor, but not overripe, of course. And play with combinations of fruit, like mixed berries, plums and raspberries, blueberries and peaches—just be sure to divide them in the dish so everyone gets a sampling of all the different varieties.

For a more substantial dessert, I sometimes line the bottom of the gratin dish with a layer of sponge cake or broken almond macaroons or amaretti cookies, sprinkled with liqueur.

Pairing fruit and flavoring

- ◆ Grand Marnier with oranges and figs
- ◆ Amaretto with peaches and apricots
- ◆ Armagnac with plums
- ◆ Dark rum with pineapple and bananas
- ◆ Framboise with mixed berries



Any kind of fruit is welcome in a gratin, but soft fruits like berries, peaches, plums, or bananas work best. Firm fruits like apples or pears need to be poached first.

A close watch means even browning. Randall Price makes his gratins in large dishes or in individual ones (far right), depending on the formality of the occasion.



Warm Fruit Gratin

The creamy topping for this gratin is much more user-friendly than the traditional sabayon. *Serves six.*

- ⅔ cup milk**
- ½ vanilla bean, split (or ¾ tsp. vanilla extract)**
- 1 large egg**
- 2 large egg yolks**
- ⅓ cup sugar**
- 2 Tbs. cornstarch**
- 2 to 3 Tbs. Sauternes or other alcohol (see box, p. 56)**
- ¾ cup whipping cream**
- 6 cups fresh berries or cut-up fruit, rinsed and thoroughly dried if necessary**

In a small saucepan, bring the milk to a boil with the split vanilla bean, if using. Remove the pan from the heat, cover, and leave to infuse about 15 min.

In a small bowl, whisk the whole egg, 1 of the egg yolks, and the sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 min. Whisk in the cornstarch. Bring the infused milk just back to a boil. Pour the hot milk into the egg mixture, whisking constantly. Return the mixture to the pan and cook over medium heat, whisking constantly until the mixture thickens and comes to a boil again. Take care to scrape the sides and all over the bottom of the pan while whisking to prevent scorching or curdling.

On the lowest heat setting, continue stirring for 1 to 2 min.—the mixture should become very smooth. Remove from the heat, discard the vanilla bean, transfer to a mixing bowl, and cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally to prevent a skin from forming. Add the remaining yolk and the Sauternes (and the vanilla extract, if using) and stir until smooth. (If you're making the cream ahead, cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day. Before the next step, bring it back to room temperature and stir until smooth.)

Before serving, arrange the oven rack so it's about 5 inches below the broiler element; heat the broiler.

In a small bowl, whip the cream until it forms soft peaks. With a spatula, gently fold the whipped cream into the pastry cream. Arrange the fruit evenly in a shallow ovenproof gratin dish, about 8x12 inches (or 6 individual dishes). Spoon the lightened pastry cream over the fruit.

Broil the gratin until golden brown, 5 to 7 min., turning the dish once or twice to avoid burnt spots. Serve hot or warm.

Randall Price is an Ohio-born private chef and cooking teacher who divides his time between Paris, Burgundy, and the Auvergne. ♦



Masmun, the Queen of Thai Curries

Pounding chile paste and making coconut milk take time, but the payoff is a rich and aromatic classic

BY SU-MEI YU



Serve and savor beef Masmun curry with refreshing and zingy accompaniments: pickled garlic, chiles in fish sauce, cucumber relish, pickled ginger, and steaming rice, as well as a salad of bitter greens.

During one of my annual visits home to Thailand, I wandered into a Muslim neighborhood on the bank of the Chao Phraya, the river that runs right through Bangkok.

I felt like I'd stepped into another country—the golden dome of a mosque was shining, and all around me were men and women in traditional Muslim dress. Then I caught the familiar scent of simmering curry spices drifting from the houses. That aroma was a potent reminder of the huge contribution that Muslims from the Middle East (some of the earliest immigrants to Thailand) have had on Thai culture,

and especially on Thai cooking. The Middle Eastern influence is particularly apparent in the complex combination of spices that make up Masmun curry, a hearty, saucy, red curry stew usually made with meat, whose seductive aromas, dramatic colors, and rich flavors make it the most treasured of all Thai curries.

As you'll see, real Masmun requires a good bit of advance work. But it's worth it. The curry's rich flavor comes from a combination of aromatics and spices that you'll pound into a chile paste to serve as the flavor base for this curry, and for many Thai dishes. You can use canned coconut milk if you want

to (I've included the proportions), but I'll teach you to make fresh, which tastes better and will give you a much more delicious result.

Great Thai curry starts with great chile paste

The chile paste for Masmun curry contains 19 ingredients (see p. 84 for sources), so I'd start preparing them a day or two ahead before pounding it. You can pound the paste well ahead of cooking the curry: sealed and chilled, pounded chile paste will retain its marvelous pungency and flavor for a month. Refer to the timetable at right.

To prepare the dried chiles for pounding, soak them in hot water with a pinch of sea salt for 30 minutes. This softens the pods and will lessen the sting on your skin as you remove the seeds and ribs. If you have sensitive skin or if you're new to working with chiles, wear rubber gloves to protect your hands.

To prepare the dried spices for pounding, refer to the recipe list and the photo below; you'll warm each one that needs grinding in a skillet just until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Cool and then grind each spice in a coffee or spice grinder. Sealed in plastic, the spices retain their aroma for a day or two.

To prepare the aromatics for pounding, refer to the recipe list on p. 63 and the photos below. You'll be roasting each one (except the cilantro) with a little oil in a small foil pouch. They'll keep for a day or two, each stored separately in a plastic bag.

To pound the chile paste, see the photos on p. 60.

Tweak the chile heat to your liking

You've probably seen curry recipes that use both fresh and dried chiles, but Masmun curry uses only dried.

The dried chiles give the curry its rusty color—and its spicy heat. While spice heat is an integral part of any Thai curry, the finished dish needn't feel like the fires of hell unless you want it to. So before you begin pounding the paste, it's a good idea to decide whether you want a curry that's mildly spicy or intensely so.

To control the spice heat, start conservatively: chiles vary (and so do palates). For moderate spice heat, remove the seeds and ribs from all but a few of the *de arbol* chiles; you can always add more spice at the table with the fresh chiles in fish sauce. For an extremely spicy result, leave the ribs and seeds in all but a few of the pods. For little or no spice, remove the seeds and ribs from all the chiles. You can also cool down the curry by decreasing the amount of white peppercorns called for in the recipe. (If you don't like super-spicy food, don't worry: the array of ingredients in Masmun curry still delivers plenty of satisfying flavors even when you remove the seeds and ribs from all the chiles.)

For the best paste, pound in a mortar

Chile paste ingredients must be pounded in the order specified in the captions on p. 60. The ingredients that need the most pounding go in first, and the sequence helps everything bind together to give you the best-textured paste. (Continued)

Timetable

Making this curry will be more relaxed if you work ahead and seal everything in plastic or glass.

UP TO 1 MONTH AHEAD

- ◆ Roast the coconuts; make and freeze the coconut milk and cream

- ◆ Pound the chile paste

Up to 1 week before pounding Soak and mince the chiles

Up to 3 days before pounding Roast the garlic, lemongrass, ginger or galangal, and shallots

Up to 2 days before pounding Toast and grind the peppercorns, coriander seed, cumin seed, caraway seed, cardamom, and cloves

UP TO 2 DAYS AHEAD

- ◆ Roast the whole shallots for the curry

- ◆ Assemble *Chiles in fish sauce*

A FEW HOURS AHEAD

- ◆ Assemble *Cucumber relish*

Mince and grind the prepared chile paste ingredients



For moderate spice heat, remove the ribs and seeds from most of the soaked *de arbol* chiles. Mince all the soaked chiles.



Grind each of the toasted spices separately and reserve them for pounding.



Mince the roasted garlic, lemongrass, ginger or galangal, and shallots. Transfer to separate bowls and reserve for pounding the paste.

Get your ingredients lined up and pound the chile paste



Have all the chile paste ingredients from the list on p. 63 prepped (photos, p. 59) and on hand. Put the sea salt and garlic in the mortar; pound until a paste forms. Add the minced cilantro stems and lemongrass; pound until incorporated into the paste.



Pound up and down with an even rhythm, rotating the mortar occasionally to ensure even pounding. Add the minced dried chiles. Use a spoon to scrape the paste down into the center of the mortar.



Continue adding each remaining ingredient one at a time, pounding to a paste before adding the next: peppercorns, coriander, cumin, caraway, nutmeg, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, mace, lime zest, galangal or ginger, shallots, and finally, shrimp paste or miso.

A mortar and pestle gives the best color, aroma, flavor, and texture. I use one that's about 7 inches in diameter; you can find them at Asian markets or in kitchen catalogs. A mortar and pestle is a good investment. Blenders and food processors are great tools, but the pestle's crushing and smearing action releases essential oils and helps give you a smooth and aromatic paste, rather than a purée or a slurry. No other tool is as thorough—nor as satisfying to use—as a mortar and pestle.

Minced aromatics and ground spices make the work go more quickly and will help you attain that paste consistency. Here are a few other tips:

- ◆ For best leverage, squat on the floor or choose a work surface about 10 inches below your waist.
- ◆ Set a damp towel under the mortar to keep it still.
- ◆ Stick to the sequence specified in the captions. This isn't random: it's an order that Thai cooks have perfected over hundreds of years.
- ◆ Pound up and down and in an even rhythm: raise the pestle about 10 inches above the mortar and then bring it straight down into the center. You'll get a much smoother paste—and a lot less tired—with this motion than if you were grinding. A bigger swing is more efficient: it lets you use the weight of the pestle with more momentum and force, and it's less

tiring than smaller movements. Plus, a big swing helps you get good rhythm going as you pound, so turn on some music with a good beat.

◆ As you add items to the mortar, use a spoon to scrape and push the paste down into the bowl.

A word on safety: keep your face clear of the mortar when pounding. You might even want to wear safety glasses until you get the hang of it. Hot chile paste really stings if it splatters into your eyes.

Prepare the fresh coconut milk ahead

If you must use canned coconut milk, it's okay in a pinch. But making fresh is worth the time and effort—the flavor is much cleaner, the aroma is fresher, and the texture is more fluid. I love getting my hands in the pulp. Follow the photos opposite.

Coconut cream and milk happen in two stages. The first milking gives you the cream; the second gives you the milk. You'll use them both for the curry. Choose coconuts that feel heavy for their size and listen for juice sloshing inside. Again, streamline the cooking by working ahead. Frozen separately in zip-top bags, coconut cream and milk will keep for at least a month. You can roast the drained pulp for another time, to use as a garnish for salads and desserts. Sealed tightly, it will keep for a couple of weeks. *(Continued)*

Milk the coconut in two passes: first for cream; then for milk

1 Bake the two coconuts at 375°F for 20 minutes and let them cool. Put them on a hard, stable surface. Set the point of a Phillips screwdriver in one of the three “eyes” and hit it with a hammer. Repeat with another eye. Catch the juice in a bowl to save for drinking, or discard it. Repeat with the second coconut.

2 With the hammer, break each coconut into 4 or 5 pieces. Beware of flying shards.

3 With a sturdy knife, pry the meat from the shell (use a dishtowel to protect your hands). Peel the dark skin off the meat, wipe the chunks clean, and slice them into 1- to 2-inch pieces.

4 In a food processor, grind half the coconut pieces until the meat turns to pulp, 30 to 60 seconds. Add 1 cup warm water and pulse until blended, about 30 seconds. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl. Grind the remaining coconut meat as above, combining everything in the large bowl.

5 For the first “milking,” massage the pulp for about 4 minutes; the juices will turn from clear to opaque. Set a fine-mesh sieve over a second bowl. Working with a handful at a time, squeeze out the liquid over the sieve and press on the solids in the sieve to extract as much juice as possible. Transfer each handful of pressed pulp to another bowl to reserve for the second milking. Chill the strained liquid for at least 1 hour to let the cream rise to the top.

6 Skim the risen cream into another bowl; reserve the cream and milk. For the second milking, pour the remaining 3 cups warm water over the reserved pulp. Repeat step 5. Combine any risen cream from the second batch with the first; combine the milks. Refrigerate everything until ready to use.



Or...use canned coconut milk

Fresh coconut milk is worlds better than canned, but in a pinch, use unsweetened coconut milk (not coconut cream) and dilute to

the right consistency: **For 3 cups of coconut milk,** dilute a 13½-ounce can with water until you have 3 cups (24 ounces total).

For 2 cups of coconut cream, dilute one 13½-ounce can with water until you have 2 cups (16 ounces total).

Want to see this in action?

Check out our video on making coconut milk on *Fine Cooking's* web site. www.finecooking.com

Cook and serve the curry



In a large saucepan over medium heat, bring the coconut milk to a boil. Boil until some cream begins to separate and rises to the top, about 2 minutes, and then skim the cream off into a 12-inch skillet.



Add the beef to the pan of boiling coconut milk; return to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer until the beef is half cooked, about 10 min. Skim off and discard the scum. Leave the pan at a lazy simmer.



Meanwhile, add the previously prepared coconut cream and 1 cup of the chile paste to the skillet with the skimmed-off coconut cream. Bring to a boil over high heat; stir to combine. Lower the heat to medium.



With a slotted spoon, transfer the beef from the saucepan to the skillet (keep the saucepan simmering). Stir well to coat the beef. Raise the heat to high and cook for another 2 minutes, stirring often.



Return the beef and the chile paste mixture to the simmering saucepan of coconut milk. Raise the saucepan heat to medium high and bring to a boil. Add the fish sauce, palm sugar, tamarind pulp, bay leaves, mace, cloves, and roasted shallots. Lower the heat to medium. Cook until the beef is tender, about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking.



Stir in the grapes and kumquat or tangerine slices; cook until the grapes are slightly soft, 1 to 2 minutes.

Meats are the best match for this curry's intense flavor

To match Masmun curry's big flavors, I'm using beef as the main ingredient. Lamb, chicken, or duck would be good, too. Stay away from seafood: it's not as good a match for this hearty curry. When I serve this curry in winter, I like to add root vegetables, such as sweet potatoes, taro, and pumpkin, along with peanuts. Here, because it's summer, I'm adding green grapes and kumquat or tangerine slices for their deli-

cious sweet-tartness; pineapple and green apples work, too (omit the peanuts if you're adding fruits).

Accompaniments are the crowning touch, providing the balance of contrasts that's the essence of Thai cooking. With Masmun curry, I like to serve fresh chiles in fish sauce for additional spice and salty pungency, and a light, refreshing cucumber relish (see the recipes at right). In addition, ♦ pickled garlic and pickled ginger, available in Asian markets, add coolness and pungency,



Cook and stir the mixture until bubbles cover the surface (I think it looks like the Mars craters) and a reddish oil forms thin rivulets, 15 to 20 minutes.



Arrange the accompaniments in small dishes near the serving bowl of curry and serve with a bowl of steaming basmati or jasmine rice.

◆ a small salad of bitter greens adds crispness. Thai cooks use pennywort, but arugula or escarole (or a mix) is a fine substitute.

Finally, enjoy each spoonful of curry and rice mixed with each of the accompaniments: you'll be rewarded with new and wonderful flavors and sensations.

Su-Mei Yu's cookbook, Cracking the Coconut, will be published in August by William Morrow. ◆

Masmun Beef Curry

Serves six.

FOR THE COCONUT MILK AND CREAM:

2 coconuts, baked at 375°F for 20 min., cooled
5 cups warm water

FOR THE CHILE PASTE:

2 dried New Mexico or California chiles, soaked in hot water for 30 min. with a pinch of sea salt
15 dried *de arbol* or Japanese chiles, soaked in hot water for 30 min. with a pinch of sea salt

1 Tbs. white peppercorns, toasted
1 Tbs. coriander seeds, toasted
½ tsp. cumin seeds, toasted
½ tsp. caraway seeds, toasted
1 tsp. cardamom pods, toasted
6 whole cloves, toasted
3 heads garlic (top third sliced off), drizzled with 1 Tbs. olive oil, wrapped in foil, roasted at 350°F for 60 min., and peeled

6 stalks lemongrass (green parts and hard outer stalks removed), drizzled with 1 Tbs. olive oil, wrapped in foil, and roasted at 350°F for 25 min.

1-inch chunk galangal or ginger, peeled, drizzled with 1 Tbs. olive oil, wrapped in foil, and roasted at 350°F for 20 min.

2 shallots, drizzled with 1 Tbs. olive oil, wrapped in foil, roasted at 350°F for 35 to 40 min., and peeled

1 tsp. sea salt
10 to 12 cilantro stems (with roots, if possible), minced

½ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
½ tsp. ground mace

Peeled zest of 1 kaffir lime or regular lime, minced

2 tsp. fermented shrimp paste or 3 tsp. red miso

FOR THE BEEF CURRY:

3 cups fresh unsweetened coconut milk (follow the photos on p. 61)

2 lb. good-quality top sirloin, sliced against the grain into thin 2-inch strips, thoroughly patted dry

2 cups fresh unsweetened coconut cream (follow the photos on p. 61)

1 cup chile paste (from the recipe above)

2 Tbs. fish sauce

2 Tbs. palm sugar or light brown sugar

2 Tbs. thick tamarind pulp (soak a 1-inch block of tamarind in ½ cup hot water for 20 min.; strain; discard water)

3 bay leaves

¼ tsp. ground mace

4 whole cloves, toasted

8 shallots, drizzled with olive oil, roasted at 350°F for 30 to 40 min., peeled, and left whole

2 cups seedless green grapes

5 kumquats or 1 peeled, seeded tangerine, either sliced paper-thin

Review the text and follow the captions starting on p. 59; use the timetable to help you work ahead.

Condiments

Serve the curry with jasmine or basmati rice, pickled garlic, pickled ginger, a salad of bitter greens, and the condiments below:

Chiles in fish sauce

10 to 12 fresh bird chiles or 7 to 8 serrano chiles, minced
½ cup fish sauce

Stir together the chiles and fish sauce. Seal in a glass jar for up to a week.

Cucumber relish

1 cucumber, peeled, halved, seeded, and thinly sliced on the diagonal

1 shallot, peeled and thinly sliced

1 fresh serrano chile (preferably red), seeded and finely chopped

Pinch sea salt

1 Tbs. sugar

2 Tbs. cider vinegar

2 sprigs cilantro, coarsely chopped

6 mint leaves, coarsely chopped

In a small bowl, mix the cucumber, shallot, chile, salt, sugar, and vinegar. Let sit for at least 10 min. to allow the flavors to meld. Just before serving, stir in the cilantro and mint.



BY GEORGEANNE BRENNAN

Host an

Design a menu that features a range of oils for an effective way to explore this fascinating ingredient

America seems to have finally found a taste for olive oil. Grocery store shelves are filled with imported oils, California producers are making oils that rival the imports, every restaurant table seems to sport a little bowl of olive oil for dipping, and cookbook and magazine recipes have us anointing everything from bean soup to spiced nuts with it.

And yet olive oil is not just one flavor. Many countries produce the oil: Italy, France, and Spain, of course, but also Greece, Portugal, Tunisia, Morocco, the United States, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria, among them. As with wine, each region and even each producer makes an olive oil with a particular character and appeal, resulting from the climate, soil, variety of olive, processing method, and, some might argue, even the personality of the producer. The character of an olive oil will also vary according to the other ingredients with which it's paired—a seared sea scallop vs. a grilled rib-eye, for example.

My goal is to know many oils intimately enough so I can exploit their characteristics when I cook, just as I do with, say, vinegars: I know when a balsamic vinegar will taste better than a sherry vinegar. Yet trying to get acquainted with a range of oils can be frustrating, even overwhelming. No matter how attentive you are to an oil that you might sample in a restaurant or to the bottle you bring home from the store, it's hard to focus clearly enough on the aroma, flavor, and texture to imprint it in your taste memory, let alone to remember how it compares to other oils you've tasted.

A fun and really effective way to explore olive oil is with friends in a side-by-side tasting of five or six different oils, followed by a buffet of dishes showcasing the characteristics of the sampled oils.

Imposing order on the universe of oils

The range of flavors, textures, and colors is so broad (and the range of individual nuances even broader)

that it can be pointless to try to categorize them precisely. But to get a handle on things, I think in terms of four general categories:

♦ **Mild-buttery**—These are well-balanced oils that tend to be light golden green and come from France, Tunisia, and the Ligurian coast of Italy. Olive oils in this category are a good choice when you want the oil as a background note to the dish, as in a mild vegetable or fish dish. Buttery oils usually make a superb salad dressing.

♦ **Fruity-peppery**—This style is typical of oils from Tuscany (or California oils made in the Tuscan style), with a classic peppery finish and a deep green-gold color. These somewhat aggressive oils are good for drizzling on bruschetta, panini, and other sandwiches. Their bold character is perfectly matched with garlicky bean or pasta dishes and grilled meats.

♦ **Fruity-spicy**—These oils are less aggressive than a full Tuscan style and tend to come from southern Italy, including Sicily. They're often a lovely, rich green. Greek oils from Crete and southeastern Greece, which are more golden in color, are also characterized by a fruity, slightly herbaceous flavor. Oils in this category are good with seafood, cooked greens, and vegetable salads.

♦ **Full-bodied-earthly**—These oils are voluptuous in the mouth, big and round. Often they have hints of almond or hay, of olive leaves and the earth. These characteristics are found in some Spanish oils and some from mid-Italy. Gold with hints of green, they're especially good with citrus and prosciutto, for dipping, and for assertive fish and pasta dishes.

For some of my favorite oils, see Sources, p. 84.

When buying a new oil, look for stores that have knowledgeable staff or at least good “shelf talkers”—notes displayed next to the bottles that describe the oils. Many gourmet catalogs and online gourmet purveyors do this well (see Sources, p. 84). *(Continued)*

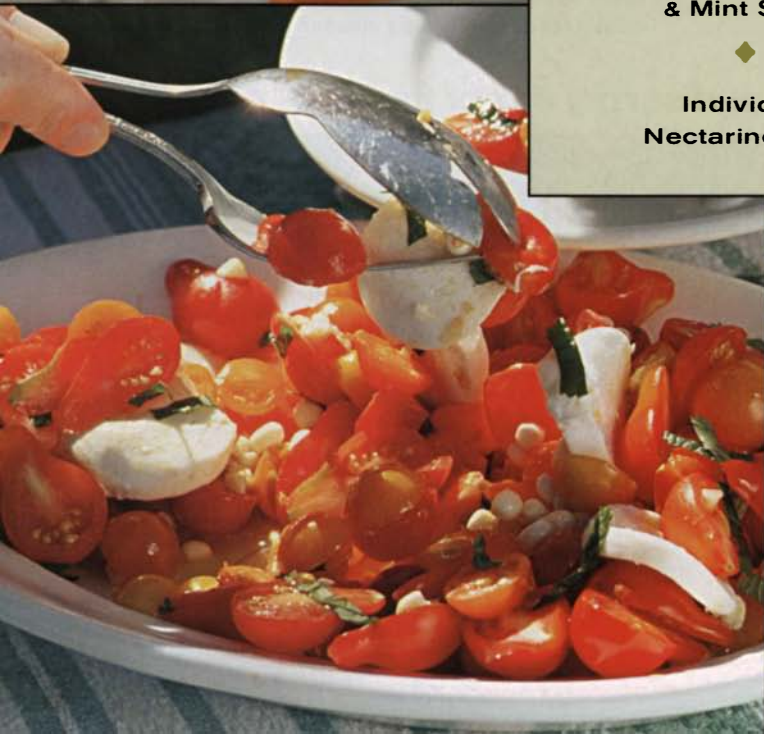


A butterflied leg of lamb is varied in thickness, so when it's grilled you get a range of rare to well-done meat—something for everyone, maybe even the dog.

Olive Oil Tasting Party



MENU
clockwise from top left
**Grilled Bread with Garlic,
Olive Oil, Prosciutto
& Oranges**
◆
**Grilled Butterflied
Leg of Lamb**
Garlicky White Beans
**Summer Squash with
Thyme & Toasted Pine Nuts**
**Cherry Tomato, Mozzarella
& Mint Salad**
◆
**Individual
Nectarine Tarts**



Grilled Bread with Garlic, Olive Oil, Prosciutto & Oranges

The combination of salty ham and tart-sweet oranges is unexpectedly delicious, especially when the whole thing is bathed in great olive oil. *Yields about 24 toasts; serves eight.*

1 loaf chewy, country-style bread
10 to 20 cloves garlic, peeled
4 to 5 oranges, peel and pith cut away, very thinly sliced, seeds removed
½ lb. prosciutto, preferably Parma, sliced paper-thin
Full-bodied—earthy extra-virgin olive oil

Prepare a wood or charcoal fire in a grill, or set a gas grill on high (you can also use a broiler). Wipe the grill rack clean and rub with oil.

Slice the bread a generous ¼ inch thick (cut the slices in half if they're large). When the coals are hot but no longer flaming, put the bread on the rack and grill until lightly browned, 1 to 2 min. Turn and grill the other side. Transfer to a plate or basket and cover to keep warm. Arrange the garlic cloves, oranges, and prosciutto on a platter and serve with the olive oil.

Each diner should rub a piece of toast with a garlic clove, drizzle the toast with olive oil, and add a slice each of orange and prosciutto.

Grilled Butterflied Leg of Lamb with Garlicky White Beans

The lamb cooks over a medium-hot fire in about thirty minutes. Since the thickness of the butterflied lamb varies from about 1 to 2½ inches, it will end up rare, medium, and well done, to suit a variety of preferences. *Serves eight.*

FOR THE BEANS:
5 cloves garlic, whole
3 fresh bay leaves
10 black peppercorns
1 large sprig fresh rosemary
1 lb. dried white navy beans, rinsed
1 tsp. salt

Water

¼ cup fruity-peppery extra-virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, smashed

FOR THE LAMB:

1 boneless butterflied leg of lamb (4 to 5 lb.)
1 Tbs. olive oil
6 cloves garlic, sliced
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
½ cup chopped mixed fresh herbs, include if possible thyme, summer savory, rosemary, marjoram in approximately equal amounts, plus a few lavender blossoms (or use 2 Tbs. dried herbes de Provence)

To make the beans—Tie the whole garlic cloves, bay leaves, peppercorns, and rosemary in a cheesecloth bag and put them in a large pot along with the beans and salt. Cover by 4 inches with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer until tender, 2 to 2½ hours. (The beans should be very slightly soupy, so add a bit of water during cooking if they become too dry; if they seem too liquidy, drain off some of the liquid.)

Meanwhile, gently heat the ¼ cup olive oil with the smashed garlic cloves until the garlic becomes fragrant. Remove from the heat and leave to infuse. When the beans are done, remove the cheesecloth seasoning bag. Before serving, take the smashed garlic from the olive oil and discard, stir the olive oil into the beans, and adjust the seasonings as needed. (The beans can be made the day before and reheated.)

To make the lamb—Prepare a charcoal or wood fire in a grill or heat a gas grill to medium high. Brush the meat with the olive oil and, with a sharp knife, make slits about ½ inch deep all over the meat. Insert the garlic slices in the slits. Rub the meat with the salt and pepper and then sprinkle with the herbs, pressing them into the flesh with the palm of your hand.

When the coals have become coated with white ash, oil the rack and grill the lamb for about 10 min., paying attention to flare-ups so it doesn't char or overcook. Turn and cook another 10 to 20 min. or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part

Grilled bread is the platform for a sweet and savory mix of flavors



Start by rubbing the toast with a clove of garlic.

Next, moisten the toast with a generous dousing of a fruity, peppery olive oil.

Top with a slice of orange and a piece of prosciutto.

Finding the words to describe the flavor

It's not often that you think about what your food really tastes like. You might think that Roquefort tastes like Roquefort and green beans like green beans. But when you let your nose and mouth talk directly to your brain, you can detect the complex flavors that exist in even the simplest foods. When trying to pinpoint an elusive taste, it can be helpful to have a list of likely descriptors. Give a list to the tasters, but encourage them to find their own words, no matter how off the wall. A sample list:

fruity, grassy, vegetal, olivy, peppery, spicy, piquant, apple, almond, citrusy, artichoky, buttery, bitter, green, metallic, sharp, ripe, sweet, silken, smooth, slippery, fat, satiny, dense, mellow, round, voluptuous, bold.



Small-production extra-virgin oils are more expensive, but they are the ones that offer the most culinary interest. For the party, each guest could bring a bottle.

of the meat registers 130°F for medium rare. Transfer the lamb to a carving board or platter (one that will collect the juices) and loosely cover it with foil. Let stand for 10 min. before carving into thin slices. Serve with a little of the carving juices spooned over, accompanied by the white beans, drizzled with more olive oil, if you like.

Cherry Tomato, Mozzarella & Mint Salad

Feel free to use large tomatoes cut into wedges rather than cherry tomatoes. *Serves six to eight.*

- 1½ cups red cherry tomatoes (about 8 oz.)
- 1½ cups yellow cherry tomatoes (about 8 oz.)
- ¾ lb. fresh mozzarella (use bocconcini or cut large balls into cubes)
- Kernels cut from 1 ear raw fresh corn (about ⅔ cup)
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup julienned fresh mint leaves
- 1 Tbs. sherry vinegar
- ½ cup fruity-spicy, rustic extra-virgin olive oil

Cut the cherry tomatoes in half, immediately putting them onto a platter where their juices can collect. Scatter the mozzarella and the corn kernels over the tomatoes and sprinkle everything with the salt and pepper; top with the mint. Drizzle with the vinegar and then with the olive oil. Toss gently.

Summer Squash with Thyme & Toasted Pine Nuts

Pattypan squash is especially pretty in this dish because of its scalloped shape, but zucchini or crook-neck squash work well, too. *Serves eight.*

- 2 lb. small pattypan or other summer squash
- ¼ tsp. salt

(Continued)



Look to the Mediterranean

With the salty-tart-sweet flavors of the grilled bread appetizer, a fruity rosé is hard to beat. Les Jamelles makes a lovely one from Cinsault grapes from the Pays d'Oc; Domaines Bunan offers a fine, dry Moulin des Costes Bandol rosé. Beringer's California blend, Rosé de Saignée, is full-bodied and could segue nicely into the main course.

Lusty red Rhône wines are great partners for the herb-and-garlic-grilled lamb; try Paul Jaboulet's Parallèle 45 (a bargain at \$7). From the

Minervois, try Domaine des Mur-ettes (a blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Carignan), or Bonny Doon's Pays d'Oc import, the wryly named Syrah Sirrah. Or check out the spicy Swanson Syrah from the Napa Valley. From Australia, try Four Sisters' smooth Grenache-Syrah blend or the fuller Syrah-Mourvèdre-Grenache blend from Penfolds.

Rosina Wilson teaches and writes about wine in the San Francisco Bay area.

Setting the stage for a well-focused olive oil tasting

On your mark...Placemats keep the oils from getting mixed up, and they make a great *aide-mémoire* for later reference.

I like to conduct the tasting just like a wine tasting, with placemats, notepads, and a certain amount of seriousness. Comparing several oils takes concentration, which is aided by a well-organized environment. I think five is a good number of oils to taste—beyond that, you risk palate fatigue. You can choose from different countries or regions or even choose different producers within a region. Match your selection of oils to the knowledge level of your guests.

◆ **Arrange the infrastructure.** Make a paper placemat, 12x18 inches, for each participant. Draw five 3-inch circles on it. Write the name and provenance of each oil next to each

circle. Put a wineglass on each circle.

◆ **Set out palate cleansers:** plates of sliced green apple, water glasses, and nonsparkling water.

◆ **Work from mild to robust.** Begin tasting with what you predict will be the mildest oil. (Or taste them ahead yourself to be sure.) Pour about ½ inch of oil into a glass, pouring only one oil at a time.

◆ **Swirl, sniff, and ponder.** Have the tasters cover the top of the glass with their hands, swirl it gently for a moment or two, and then smell the oil. It should smell mostly of olive, with no off odors or rancidity. See if you can detect other odors, such as the aroma of almonds, grass, pepper (see the list of descriptors on p. 67). Encourage the

tasters to find descriptors and write down their thoughts.

◆ **Sip, slurp, and keep thinking.** To taste, take a small sip of the oil, keeping it forward in the mouth. Feel the texture. Is it thick, thin, round, smooth, slippery? Roll it around the roof and tongue, and then suck a little air into your mouth to aerate the oil and try to discover the flavors you perceive. Write them down.

◆ **Swallow and savor.** Finally, swallow the oil and notice the finish. Is it long, short, pleasant, or not?

◆ **Discuss.** Now encourage everyone to talk and share reactions.

◆ **Refresh, but keep working.** Have a bite of apple and a swallow of water and continue with the other oils.

⅛ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves
2 to 3 Tbs. mild-buttery extra-virgin olive oil
3 Tbs. toasted pine nuts

Cut the squash from stem end to blossom end into slices about ¼ inch thick (if using yellow or crookneck squash, just cut into ¼-inch rounds). Fit a steamer basket in a pan, add water up to the basket level, and bring the water to a boil over high. Add the squash, season generously with salt and pepper, and cover the pan. Reduce the heat to low and steam until tender, 5 to 6 min. Transfer to a serving bowl or platter and sprinkle with the thyme. Cover to keep warm. Just before serving, drizzle with the olive oil and gently lift the slices of squash so the oil gets distributed. Sprinkle with the pine nuts and serve immediately.

Individual Nectarine Tarts

For this simple-to-make tart, you can use purchased frozen puff pastry if you don't want to make your own. (For a recipe and instructions on making your

own quick puff pastry, see *Fine Cooking* #13, p. 27). Yields 8 tarts.

2 sheets (each about 9½x10 inches) prepared puff pastry (Pepperidge Farm works fine), thawed
2 lb. ripe nectarines, pitted and cut into ⅛-inch slices
¼ cup sugar
4 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into small bits

Cut each pastry sheet in half lengthwise and then crosswise into quarters. Line two baking sheets with parchment and heat the oven to 425°F.

Roll out each pastry rectangle until it's about 7½x5 inches; don't worry about keeping it a perfect rectangle. Arrange the pastry bases on the baking sheets, and fold up the two long edges of each base to make about a ½-inch border. Arrange the sliced fruit down the center of each rectangle, sprinkle with sugar, and dot with butter. Bake in the hot oven until the pastry is deep golden brown on the bottom and the fruit looks slightly browned around the edges, 20 to 30 min. Serve warm.

Georgianne Brennan is a cooking teacher and the author of *The Food & Flavors of Haute Provence* and *The Mediterranean Herb Cookbook*. ◆

An Olive Oil Primer

How to make sense of what's for sale so you can keep your pantry stocked with oils that will make the meal

BY PEGGY KNICKERBOCKER

There was a time when I thought that all olive oils were the same. Growing up, Bertolli was the only brand we ever bought, partly because my father was loyal to it for his weekly mayonnaise-making ritual, partly because there weren't many other options. It's astonishing how fast the buying landscape can change. The challenge is no longer in finding interesting, superior olive oils; the problem—and it's one I'm happy to have—is in choosing among them.

High-quality olive oil plays such a starring role in my cooking that I always have about a dozen bottles on hand. Indeed, a beckoning array of extra-virgin olive oils, stored in a cool, dark spot in my kitchen, gives me the same sense of security and pride that a well-stocked wine cellar might provide a wine lover.

Decoding the label's language

It's common knowledge at this point that extra-virgin olive oil is the best grade. It's also the only kind I use—besides its deeper, more olivy taste, it's the purest and least chemically altered.

According to the International Olive Oil Council (which is the standard setter for most oil-producing countries, but not the U.S.), an olive oil can be labeled extra-virgin if it 1) has been mechanically extracted from the olive, meaning no chemicals or heat were used; 2) has 1% acidity or less; and 3) has no defects in flavor and aroma (as determined by a panel of professional olive oil tasters who are trained to detect flaws, such as musty, winy, or muddy-sediment qualities).

For California oils labeled “extra-virgin,” you can look for the California Olive Oil Council's certification seal or logo to be sure you're getting the real thing. The California council follows the same guidelines as the IOOC in awarding extra-virgin status.

Along with the words “extra-virgin,” other terms may appear on the label. Here's what they mean.

◆ **Cold pressed.** This means that the oil was extracted from the olives without using heat or chemicals; by definition, all extra-virgin olive oil is cold pressed. The term doesn't distinguish between artisanal oil extraction methods and the automated presses used by large-scale producers.

◆ **First pressing.** This is a given for an extra-virgin oil. The best olive oils come from the first and only pressing of the fruit.

◆ **Unfiltered olive oil.** This is a matter of preference, not a measure of quality. Some producers feel

THE COLOR OF AN OLIVE OIL

An oil's color can hint at when the olives were picked, but color doesn't promise quality or flavor. Deep green oils are often made from barely ripe green olives harvested at the season's start (though it's also possible that a bunch of leaves



that unfiltered olive oil has more flavor, just as some people prefer orange juice with pulp. Unfiltered olive oils may be slightly cloudy or have sediment at the bottom of the bottle.

◆ **Estate or single-estate oil.** This means that the olives used to make the oil were grown on a single farm. The flavor of these olive oils varies from year to year (depending on weather and soil conditions), which I think is part of their appeal.

Unless an extra-virgin oil is marked as an “estate”

slipped into the hopper). Yellow oils usually indicate that the olives were picked late in the season, when they were black and ripe, producing a sweeter, rounder oil.

or “single-estate” oil, it may be a blend of oils from many farms and types of olive, but it can still be a top-quality oil. The big commercial producers almost always blend oils made from ripe and unripe fruit, and from many regions and countries. This isn’t a sign of an inferior oil, nor is it a compromise. These producers offer perfectly good, consistent oils that are fine as “bulk” cooking oils, but they’re not oils of grand distinction, and they wouldn’t be the ones you would want to showcase in a special meal. I use these

less expensive extra-virgin oils for sautéing or baking, or whenever the flavor of the oil isn’t the main objective. The varietal character of a great oil fades in heat, so save your best oils to anoint a dish after



or toward the end of cooking, to dress salads, or just to drizzle over bread.

A lesser grade is just called “olive oil.” Previously called “pure olive oil” or “100% olive oil,” this is made from olive oil that didn’t qualify as extra-virgin. It’s refined to remove impurities and then blended with a small percentage of extra-virgin oil; its acidity must be less than 1.5%. Olivepomace oil is an inferior grade of oil made from the leftover paste after olives have been pressed, and it’s nothing you’d ever find in my pantry.

Tasting olive oil to find your own style

The four enemies of olive oil are age, heat, air, and light. Your best bet for keeping these enemies at bay, even before you bring the oil home, is to buy from a scrupulous retailer who is passionate and knowledgeable about olive oil. Note where the oil is shelved; if it’s kept under bright lights or near a window, pass.

How olives get from

Not much has changed in the cultivation of olives in the past few thousand years. Olive trees are hardy and can withstand craggy conditions, little water, and lots of wind and sun. They’re fairly low maintenance, usually needing pruning once a year at harvest time. As with any agricultural crop, weather and soil conditions play a big role in the outcome. But it’s during the harvest and pressing that a small producer can really control the oil’s quality and style.

Olives are harvested from October through January (in California, harvesting is possible through the spring). Although it’s hard to

generalize, the character of many regions’ oils is a result of when they harvest. In the Chianti region of Tuscany, for example, most growers harvest early (for fear of frost), which makes Tuscan oils green and assertive, often with a peppery bite at the back of the throat. In Greece and parts of Spain, olives tend to be harvested when they’re slightly riper and fruitier. Olives in Liguria and Provence have a buttery, sweet flavor because they’re most often picked late in the season.

Olives bruise easily, so they must be picked with care. **1** Hand picking is the best and most labor-intensive method. Some growers cover the

e tree to the bottle

ground around the tree with tarpaulins, nets, or silk parachutes and use sticks to shake olives from the limbs. Larger, more industrial enterprises use automatic harvesters that clamp onto the trunk and vibrate the olives off.

Once they're collected, the olives are rushed to the mill for pressing. If they're not crushed within 24 hours, they'll oxidize and start to ferment, which can make the oil acidic, produce off flavors, and lead to rancidity.

To extract the oil, olives are first crushed and then pressed. **2** The more traditional crushing method, between gargantuan granite



stones, produces an olive paste that's mixed and spread on round mats. **3** The mats are then stacked on top of one another like an old-fashioned phonograph, pressure is applied, and liquids drip from the circumference of the mats and are collected in a moat-like trough at the base of the press. From the base, the liquids usually proceed to a centrifuge, where the water in the olive, called vegetable water, is separated from the oil. **4** It's important to get the water away from the oil quickly to avoid fermentation.

Some artisanal producers use other extraction methods. The Sinolea method, for example, massages the oil from the olive with thousands of tiny crescent-shaped steel blades—no pressing is involved. In Spain, I witnessed a method called *lágrima* (which means “tear”), where the crushed olives are spread on mats to “cry” out the oil without pressure, merely from the weight of one olive-laden mat atop the next.

Also, try to find out the oil's acidity and harvest year, which give a clue to freshness. Among high-end extra-virgin oils, it's becoming more common to find this information on the label; if not, ask the shop's olive oil buyer, who should know.

◆ **Acidity level.** A true extra-virgin oil can't surpass 1% acidity (the measurement refers to the amount of free fatty acid in the oil). Some oils fall well below that limit, bottoming out at about 0.2% acidity. Such small differences are significant, not because the oil will taste acidic but because lower acidity indicates that the olives were of high quality, handled properly, and crushed quickly after picking.

◆ **Harvest year.** Unlike fine wine, olive oil doesn't improve with age. Ideally, buy oil from the most recent harvest. Olives are usually harvested in fall and winter; if you're buying in the summer of 2000, the best you can do is purchase from the 1999 harvest.

While information on acidity level and harvest year are important, the final decision on which oil to buy will ultimately rest on your own style and preferences, as well as on how you plan to use the oil (see the olive oil tasting article, pp. 64–68). The range of extra-virgin olive oils on the market is vast—you'll see 3-liter tins for \$15 and small, fancy half-liter bottles going for close to \$30 in gourmet shops—oils at the higher end of the scale may be made with hand-picked olives and artisanal pressing methods. Start tasting them and you'll discover that, just like good wine, every oil has a distinct flavor and style. Don't be shy about asking for tastes and advice; many specialty shops offer formal tastings or will open a bottle upon request.

Once a bottle is opened, use it. Olive oil doesn't turn rancid as quickly as nut oil, but after several months, its flavor will deteriorate. Store olive oil in a cool, dark place, away from the stove. The refrigerator is *too* cool: water can condense on the lid and drip back into the oil, altering its flavor.

I keep my best olive oils in their original bottles for easy recognition, but I decant my “bulk” extra-virgin oil, which comes in half-gallon tins, into a clean red wine bottle so it's easier to pour what I need for cooking. The green glass also protects the oil from light.

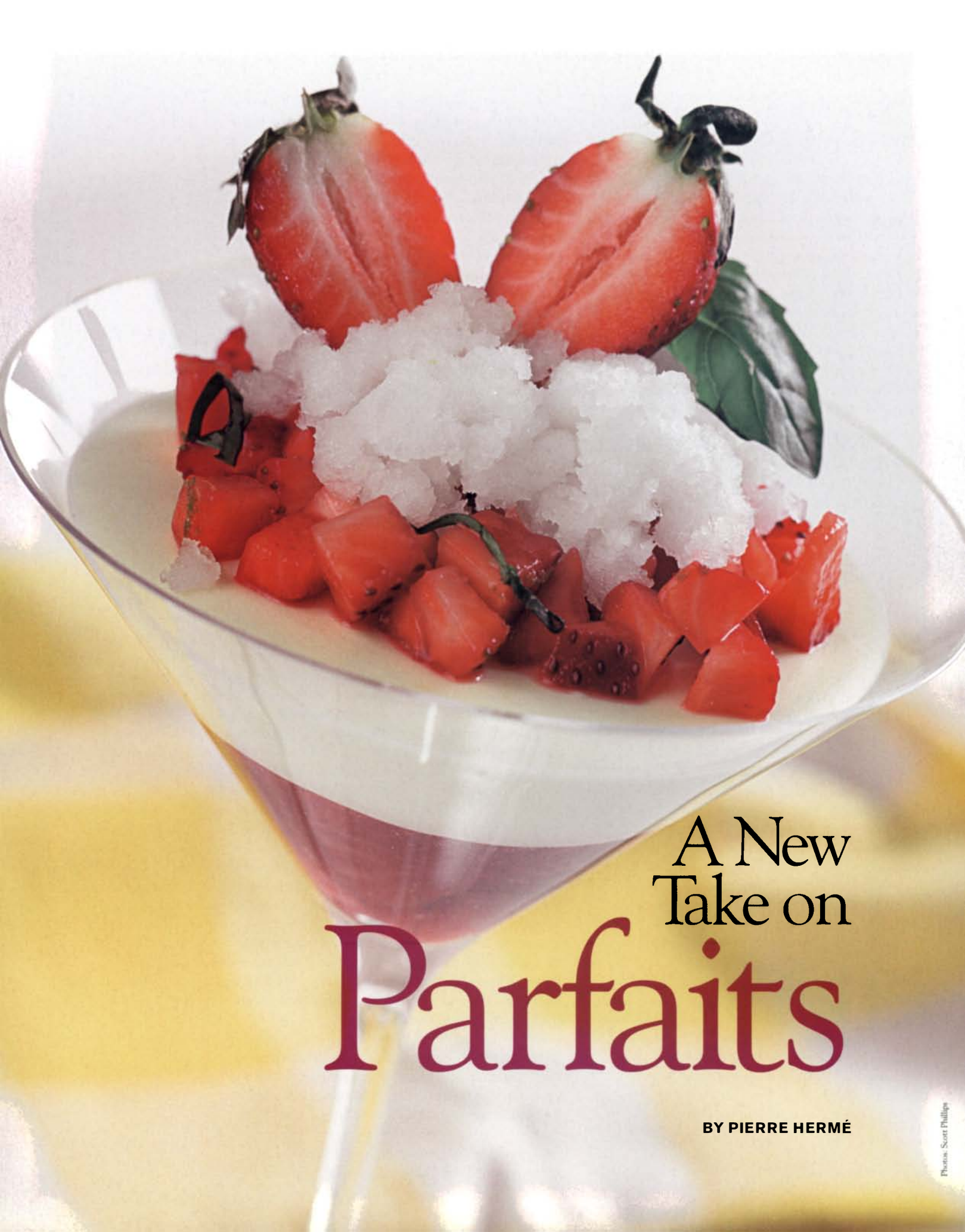
Is it really “extra-virgin”?

The International Olive Oil Council's rules for extra-virgin olive oil only apply to the council's member countries. Since the United States isn't a member, an olive oil that doesn't make the extra-virgin cut in an IOOC country (virtually the entire Mediterranean) could be exported to the United States and labeled “extra-virgin.” Whether (or how often) this happens is a matter of debate, but it's probably not a concern when you're choosing a premium oil to feature in your cooking—these upscale olive oils are the cream of the crop.

If you're shopping for an olive oil for everyday cooking, the picture gets a little fuzzier. “Frankly, it's a difficult issue,” says Greg Reisinger, a California Olive Oil Council board member and a producer of B.R. Cohn olive oil. “There's no way to know for sure.”

Here's Greg's advice for choosing authentic extra-virgin olive oil: “Unless a store is having a special, you need to be suspicious of an olive oil that's priced extremely low.” And, whether you're shopping for a “bulk” oil for cooking or a fancy oil to use as a condiment, “The best test is to taste them to find the ones you like.”

Peggy Knickerbocker is the author of *Olive Oil: From Tree to Table* (Chronicle Books). ◆



A New
Take on
Parfaits

BY PIERRE HERMÉ

Three layered desserts
full of appealing contrasts:
smooth vs. crunchy,
rich vs. refreshing, playful
vs. elegant

As a fourth-generation pastry chef whose desserts are often startlingly untraditional, I'm often asked where I get my inspiration. It's a hard question to answer since just about every encounter I have—with food, people, even artwork—is a potential creative lead. What's easier to explain is what makes my desserts so original: it's the way I combine flavors and textures to such exciting, surprising, and above all, delicious effect.

The layered desserts I'm presenting here (the *Fine Cooking* staff has taken to calling them parfaits) began with an idea for a mousse, but not a typical fruit-flavored or chocolate mousse. While I wanted the mousse to be delicious in its own right, it also had to be somewhat neutral so it would harmonize with the other components in the parfait. A velvety cream cheese mousse was the answer; it's subtly tangy and only faintly sweet, the perfect backdrop to the refreshing flavors and contrasting textures with which I intended to team it.



Ginger and cardamom are the surprising flavors in the orange "marmalade" layer of this streusel-topped parfait.

Caramelized Rice Krispies add snap, crackle, and crunch to an otherwise creamy chocolate rice pudding parfait.

An icy lemon granita delivers a refreshing jolt of coolness in the strawberry parfait opposite.

Make a cream cheese mousse for all three parfaits



Beat heavy cream until it forms soft peaks; cover and refrigerate.



Pour a hot sugar syrup onto mixing egg yolks, avoiding the beaters. Mix until pale and ribbony and then set aside to cool.



After heating cream cheese and softened gelatin over a double boiler, fold in the cooled egg yolk mixture.

Once I settled on the mousse, I created three parfaits, each with its own beguiling personality. One is rich and soothing: along with the mousse, it layers chocolate rice pudding with caramelized Rice Krispies and a dollop of chocolate-hazelnut whipped cream. Another is fresh and sassy, with a strawberry compote, freshly chopped strawberries, and a sprinkling of icy lemon granita. The third is cool and sophisticated, with a cardamom-ginger-orange mixture that I call a marmalade, a crumbly streusel topping, and a garnish of fresh raspberries.

Cocktail glasses show off the layers

What I like most about these parfaits are their contrasting flavors, textures, and temperatures. You'll notice these juxtaposing sensations right away, and I think you'll agree that they really make the parfaits come to life. To get the full effect, I like to plunge my spoon straight down to the bottom to get a sampling of each layer in every bite.

Before you start cooking, choose serving glasses for the parfaits. I think they look best in martini glasses, but there's no need to buy a set just for these recipes. Another type of cocktail glass or wineglass will show off the dessert's pretty layers just as well.

These recipes make eight generous servings, if you're using eight-ounce glasses. But if your glasses are smaller than that, the yield will stretch to nine or ten slightly smaller servings.

A cream cheese mousse supplies lightness and body

I love the subtle flavor of this cream cheese mousse: slightly tangy with a hint of salt. You're aiming for a

soft, smooth, and light texture. To achieve this, you'll prepare three separate components—a melted cream cheese, gelatin, and confectioners' sugar mixture; an egg yolk and sugar syrup mixture; and whipped cream—and then gently fold them into one another.

A small amount of gelatin helps the mousse set once it's chilled, and it also contributes to the silky, smooth texture. (Gelatin also firms up the strawberry compote and the orange marmalade.) To use powdered gelatin, soften it in a liquid—the granules will swell—and then heat it so it dissolves.

Temperature is important when working with gelatin. The key is to fold the egg yolk mixture into the cream-cheese–gelatin mixture once they've both just cooled to room temperature. If the mixtures are too cool, the gelatin will be too set and won't blend in evenly; you'll end up with flecks of hardened gelatin in the mousse. If the mixtures are too warm, however, it will knock some air out of the whipped cream and the mousse won't be as light.

Use a light hand to fold in the whipped cream. The whipped cream provides volume and lightness in the mousse, so you want to fold it in gently without losing the air that has been beaten into it, as shown in the photo opposite.

A few more guiding thoughts

Once you've conquered the mousse, the rest is pretty straightforward. Here's one more tip for each of the three parfaits:

For the orange marmalade parfait, choose an orange with a thin layer of pith; a Minneola tangelo works well. To make the marmalade, you simmer



Fold in the whipped cream: cut into the center, scrape along the bottom and side, and lift the mousse over onto itself while rotating the bowl a quarter turn.

unpeeled orange slices in a sugar syrup and then purée the mixture in a blender. I like the bitter edge that the peel provides, especially when it's countered with ginger, cardamom, black pepper, and sugar. For oranges with a lot of pith, such as navels, you'll need to taste and adjust the spices and sugar so the bitterness isn't overwhelming.

For the chocolate rice pudding parfait, the rice should still be *al dente* and the consistency a little soupy before stirring in the chocolate—the mixture thickens a lot once the chocolate is added. If the pudding stiffens too much (some brands of chocolate will thicken more than others), stir in a bit more milk. For the chocolate, I use Valrhona (my favorite type for this recipe is called guanaja), but any good-quality bittersweet is fine.

For the strawberry compote parfait, you can play with the texture of the icy lemon granita topping by stirring more frequently during freezing. The easiest way to make it is to simply stir the mixture once while it's freezing and then pulse it in a food processor just before serving. This produces a fine, snowy-textured granita. For a granita with larger crystals and a coarser texture, stir the mixture with a fork every 15 minutes until it freezes and skip the processor. To serve this coarser granita, scrape an ice-cream scoop or spoon across the surface of the granita to produce chunky shards.

Finally, a note about superfine sugar, which I use often, especially when the sugar needs to dissolve quickly or without heat. If you can't find superfine sugar (also called bar sugar) in the store, make your own by processing granulated sugar in a food processor for about a minute.

Cream Cheese Mousse

This mousse can be made up to two days ahead of serving the parfaits. Have ready your parfait glasses, filled with the pudding, compote, or marmalade.

Yields 4 cups.

1½ cups heavy cream

⅓ cup sugar

4 Tbs. cold water

3 large egg yolks

1½ tsp. powdered gelatin

8 oz. cream cheese (I use Philadelphia)

3 Tbs. confectioners' sugar

In a bowl, beat the heavy cream until it forms soft peaks; cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

In a very small saucepan, combine the sugar and 2 Tbs. of the cold water and boil to 248°F (you may need to tip the pan to get an accurate reading). Meanwhile, in a small bowl, beat the egg yolks with an electric mixer (a hand-held works best) until blended. When the syrup reaches 248°F, turn the mixer on high speed and pour the sugar syrup onto the mixing yolks, avoiding the beaters and the sides of the bowl. Beat on medium speed until the mixture cools and becomes pale and ribbony, about 4 min; set aside.

In a small bowl, sprinkle the gelatin over the remaining 2 Tbs. cold water and let it soften and swell, about 2 min. Meanwhile, warm the cream cheese until soft in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water, being careful not to overheat it. Whisk until it's smooth. Add the confectioners' sugar and the softened gelatin, whisking until smooth and completely blended. Remove the bowl from the heat and let the mixture cool to room temperature, 10 to 15 min.; it will thicken slightly. Fold the reserved sugar-egg-yolk mixture into the cream cheese mixture. Then gently fold in the whipped cream.

Chocolate Rice Pudding Parfait with Gianduja Whipped Cream & Caramelized Rice Krispies

The rice pudding can be made up to three days ahead, the whipped cream up to two days ahead. The Rice Krispies will keep for up to a month in an airtight container. Gianduja (pronounced *john-DOO-yah*) is chocolate that's blended with ground hazelnuts (see Sources, p. 84). *Serves eight.*

FOR THE CHOCOLATE RICE PUDDING:

3 cups whole milk

2½ Tbs. sugar

Pinch salt

⅓ cup raw arborio rice

5 oz. good-quality bittersweet chocolate (I like Valrhona guanaja), finely chopped

4 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

½ cup golden raisins, simmered in water until plump and then drained (optional)

1 recipe Cream Cheese Mousse (see above)

FOR THE CARAMELIZED RICE KRISPIES:

4 Tbs. superfine sugar

2 Tbs. water

2 cups Rice Krispies

(Ingredient list continues)



To activate gelatin granules, first soften them in a cold liquid (here it's strawberry juices) and then heat them.

For perfectly set layers, chill the parfaits briefly after each addition.



FOR THE GIANDUJA WHIPPED CREAM:

8 oz. heavy cream

3 oz. gianduja chocolate (or good-quality bittersweet chocolate), chopped

To make the pudding—In a saucepan, combine the milk, sugar, salt, and rice. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook at a vigorous simmer, stirring occasionally, until the rice is tender but not breaking apart and the pudding is still a little soupy but thicker than cream, about 15 min. Stir in the chopped chocolate and butter until well combined; the mixture will thicken. Mix in the raisins, if using. Divide among the eight glasses you're using and chill until needed.

Meanwhile, make the cream cheese mousse. Spoon equal amounts of the mousse over the pudding in the glasses. Chill until needed, at least 30 min.

To make the caramelized Rice Krispies—In a 3-qt. or larger pot, bring the sugar and water to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil for 1 min. Sprinkle the Rice Krispies over the syrup, stirring gently to coat (the mixture will clump). Keep stirring gently over medium high (the rice will separate) until the rice is golden brown (the pan may smoke a bit), 4 to 5 min. Remove from the heat and immediately dump the caramelized Rice Krispies onto a baking sheet to cool. When ready to use, break up clumps with your hands.

To make the gianduja whipped cream—In a saucepan, bring the cream to a boil. Add the chopped chocolate and whisk vigorously until melted. Transfer to a stainless bowl. Refrigerate, covered, until the cream is well chilled, about 3 hours. Whisk the cream until it forms soft peaks. Chill until needed.

To assemble the parfait—Remove the glasses with the pudding and mousse from the refrigerator. Sprinkle on a generous layer of caramelized Rice Krispies and then a spoonful of the gianduja whipped cream. Finish with another sprinkling of Rice Krispies. Serve right away.

Strawberry Compote Parfait with Lemon Granita

The granita can be made up to a week ahead and the compote up to two days ahead, but the strawberries with lemon and basil must be done at the last minute. *Serves eight.*

FOR THE LEMON GRANITA:

1½ cups water

½ cup superfine sugar

Grated zest from ½ lemon

⅓ cup plus 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice, with pulp

FOR THE STRAWBERRY COMPOTE:

18 oz. strawberries, cut in ¼-inch pieces (about 3½ cups)

¼ cup plus 2 Tbs. superfine sugar

1½ tsp. powdered gelatin

2 tsp. fresh lemon juice

6 oz. strawberries, puréed in a food processor (to yield ⅓ cup purée)

1 recipe Cream Cheese Mousse (see p. 75)

FOR THE STRAWBERRIES WITH LEMON AND BASIL:

18 oz. best-quality strawberries, cut into ¼-inch dice
5 to 6 medium basil leaves, cut in very thin strips

Peeled zest from ¼ lime (pith removed), minced
1½ tsp. fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs. superfine sugar
A few grinds of freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE GARNISH:

8 strawberries, whole, stems removed (unless you have freshly picked strawberries with the long stem still attached)
8 pretty basil leaves

To make the lemon granita—In a bowl, combine all the ingredients. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Freeze in a small, shallow container (about 5x7x2 inches) until the mixture is just slushy, about 1½ hours. Beat the mixture with a fork and return to the freezer until it's completely frozen, another 2 to 3 hours at least. Keep frozen until ready to serve.

To make the compote—Put the strawberries and the ¼ cup sugar in a stainless-steel bowl that fits over a saucepan to make a double boiler. Cover with plastic wrap and cook over a low flame until the strawberries have given up their juices, about 45 min. Remove from the heat and transfer the berries to a colander set over a bowl to catch the juices. Put both the colander and the bowl in the refrigerator to drain overnight, or until the strawberries are cold, 5 to 6 hours.

Pour the strained strawberry juices into a saucepan or a microwave-proof bowl (you'll have about ¾ cup). Sprinkle the gelatin onto the cold strawberry juices and let the granules swell and soften, about 3 min. Heat the gelatin mixture to melt it, about 2 min. on medium heat or 15 to 45 seconds in the microwave. In another bowl, combine the lemon juice, strawberry purée, and the remaining 2 Tbs. sugar. Stir in the gelatin mixture, and let sit until it has the consistency of unbeaten egg whites, about 1 hour at room temperature (to speed it up, put the bowl over an ice bath or in the fridge). Add the drained, cooked strawberries, stir gently, and immediately distribute the mixture evenly among the eight glasses you're using. Refrigerate until it's set.

Meanwhile, make the cream cheese mousse. Spoon equal amounts of the mousse over the compote in the glasses. Chill until needed, at least 30 min.

To make the strawberries with lemon and basil—Put the strawberries in a bowl. Add the remaining ingredients; mix gently. Chill until ready to serve.

To assemble the parfait—Just before serving, remove the glasses with the compote and mousse from the refrigerator. Break the granita into large chunks, put it in a food processor, and pulse just until it's crushed and snowy. Spoon a layer of seasoned strawberries over the mousse and sprinkle some of the granita over the berries. Garnish each with a fresh strawberry and a basil leaf. Serve right away.

Orange & Cardamom Marmalade Parfait with Raspberries & Streusel

Use a Minneola tangelo or a thin-skinned orange for the marmalade, which can be made a day ahead. The streusel is best when fresh, but it can be made ahead and stored in an airtight container. *Serves eight.*

FOR THE ORANGE MARMALADE:

1 medium Minneola tangelo or thin-skinned orange (about 7 oz.), unwaxed if possible

⅔ cup water
½ cup plus 2 Tbs. granulated sugar; more to taste
⅔ cup fresh orange juice
3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
⅛ tsp. ground cardamom; more to taste
Scant ¼ tsp. ground ginger; more to taste
Scant ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste
1 tsp. powdered gelatin

1 recipe Cream Cheese Mousse (see p. 75)

FOR THE STREUSEL:

4 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened
⅓ cup superfine sugar
2 oz. (½ cup) finely ground almonds
Big pinch salt
½ cup all-purpose flour

FOR THE GARNISH:

Confectioners' sugar
8 oz. fresh raspberries

To make the marmalade—Trim the ends of the orange, halve it lengthwise, and slice it thin (about ⅛ inch). Bring the water and sugar to a boil and add the orange slices; simmer for 5 min. Let the mixture cool, cover the pan, and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Drain the slices in a strainer or colander, discarding the liquid. Put the slices in a blender with ⅓ cup of the orange juice, the lemon juice, and the spices. Blend until completely puréed, about 30 seconds. Leave in the blender.

Put the remaining ⅓ cup orange juice in a small saucepan or a microwave-safe bowl. Sprinkle the gelatin over the juice and let swell and soften, about 3 min. Heat the mixture to melt the gelatin, about 2 min. on medium heat or 15 to 45 seconds in the microwave. Add the gelatin mixture to the blender and blend until it's completely incorporated, about 15 seconds. Taste and add more spices and sugar, if necessary. Distribute the marmalade equally among the eight glasses you're using and chill.

Meanwhile, make the cream cheese mousse. Spoon equal amounts of the mousse over the marmalade in the glasses. Chill until needed, at least 30 min.

To make the streusel—Put the butter in a bowl and add the rest of the ingredients one at a time, mixing until well blended after each addition. Chill until firm enough to crumble, about 1 hour in the refrigerator or 30 min. in the freezer. Heat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment. Crumble the streusel and sprinkle it evenly on a baking sheet. Bake until pale brown, about 14 min. Let cool.

To assemble the parfait—Just before serving, sprinkle the parfaits liberally with the cooled streusel. Dust with confectioners' sugar and scatter the raspberries on top.

Crumble the streusel into pebble-size pieces before baking...



...and then sprinkle it liberally over the mousse as the crowning layer for the orange marmalade parfait.

Pierre Hermé is the owner-pastry chef of pâtisseries in Paris and Tokyo. He wrote Desserts by Pierre Hermé (Little, Brown) with Dorie Greenspan. ♦

Secrets of the salad bowl: what is mesclun?

In restaurants and home kitchens alike, it used to be that salad greens meant lettuce—red leaf, green leaf, Bibb, romaine, and so forth. But all that started to change about fifteen years ago when chefs and gourmet travellers began to acquire an appetite for the delicious and vibrant mesclun salads of the Provence region of France.

The word *mesclun* comes from the Latin word *mesclumo*, which means mixture. Traditional mesclun (also called *misticanza* in some regions of Italy) is foraged from the wild and includes tender shoots, leaves, and flowers of edible plants and herbs that grow on the sunny hillsides in the Mediterranean climate. The hallmark of mesclun is a balance of colors, textures, and flavors that range from sweet and tender to bitter and crisp to peppery and pungent.

Today, markets in places like New York City sell close to 10,000 pounds of mesclun every week, so growers and chefs have obviously had to come up with sources other than the wild plants foraged from nearby hillsides. The mesclun we find in markets is cultivated from seed and grown both indoors and out. It ranges from spirited and delicious to bland and uninteresting.

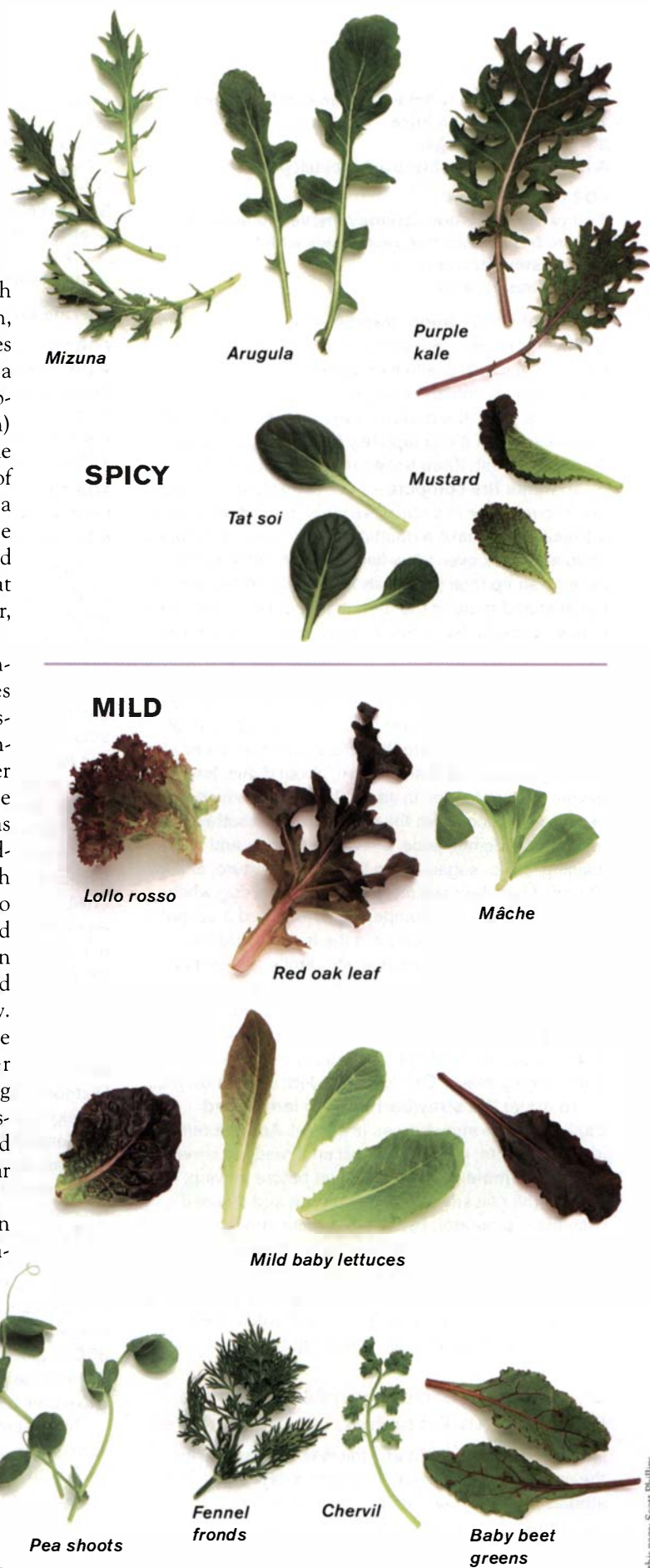
Supermarket mesclun, which tends to be rather ordinary in both taste and complexity, is most often a mix of ten to twelve varieties, including red oak leaf lettuce, red and green romaine, radicchio, curly endive, frisée, *lollo*

rosso (frilly leaf lettuce with red edges), baby spinach, sometimes baby chard leaves or mustard greens, as well as a bit of *tat soi* (the small thumb-shaped flavorful Asian green) and sometimes arugula. The best mixes are composed of only baby leaves. If you see a lot of cut-up bits (full-size radicchio is often chopped and added), you'll know that the mix was made from larger, tougher plants.

Fortunately, many greenmarkets and gourmet stores now sell wonderful and distinctive mesclun grown by individual producers in smaller quantities. Some of these mixes contain as many as thirty different plants, including flowers and herbs (which are very delicate and spoil too rapidly for supermarkets) and things like young dandelion greens, purslane, mizuna, and curly cress, to name a few. While these mixes can be pricey (upwards of \$15 per pound), they need nothing more than the simplest dressing of extra-virgin olive oil and a bit of lemon juice or vinegar to make a tremendous salad.

You can also grow your own mesclun: many seed companies now sell mixed seed packs containing all the varieties you need for your own little salad patch. Just remember to plan your growing season around the cooler months of late spring and early fall; many greens turn overly bitter in the heat of high summer.

—Molly Stevens,
contributing editor



What to look for when buying fresh tuna

Fresh tuna is a great choice for the grill, but since it can be expensive, it's important to know how to tell if you're getting your money's worth.

The best-tasting tuna—bluefin, yellowfin, bigeye, or albacore—will range in color from deep red to pink. Ideally, tuna will be displayed as a whole loin, and steaks will be cut at your request. But if your store displays steaks already cut, look for moist (but not wet or weepy), shiny, almost translucent meat. This means the steak is fresh and recently cut. Cut steaks will begin to oxidize and turn brown fairly quickly. If they look dull and matte, or very brown, then they're probably old. Another sign of age is "gapping," when the meat of the muscle starts to separate into flakes. If you're in doubt about freshness, ask for a smell; the fish should have a fresh sea-air smell, not an overly fishy odor.

All tuna steaks will have a strip of darker meat running through them. This nutritious meat is perfectly edible but has a strong flavor that many people don't like. You can cut it out, or better yet, choose steaks with a minimal amount of it.

—Susie Middleton,
managing editor



Storing leftover wine

If you're saving wine to use in cooking, be sure to store it in the fridge, and try one of the tips below to keep it even fresher.

- ◆ Lubricate the cork by dipping it into a bit of wine and quickly tamping it down into the bottle.
- ◆ The less air in the bottle the better, so decant the wine into the smallest possible container.
- ◆ Use a Vacu-Vin to suction the air out to slow deterioration, but know that subtle nuances won't be preserved. The more wine left in the bottle, the better the Vacu-Vin works: you don't need as great a vacuum, so fewer aromatics get pulled out of the wine.
- ◆ Or use Private Preserve (which I vastly prefer), a product that

sprays the wine with a blanket with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, and argon, which is much more effective for preserving nuances.

Wine preserved by any of these methods will likely still be good enough for cooking after a week, but you're better off using it in three days or so. The wine is too old to cook with if it has a musty, stale, or oxidized odor (which might smell like dry sherry) or smells like cooked or dried fruit. It will taste tired, faded, or off: sometimes the tannins, acids, or both taste particularly astringent or strong.

For sources for Vacu-Vin and Private Preserve, see p. 84.

—Rosina Tinari Wilson,
contributing editor

Sorting out strainers: colanders vs. sieves

We commonly refer to both colanders and sieves as "strainers," although technically we use a colander to drain (discarding liquids like pasta water) and a sieve to strain (saving liquids like broth for stock). A colander has a wide bowl (often with two handles) and feet or a base that let it stand on its own in a sink while you pour a pot of pasta or boiled vegetables into it. Made from plastic, stainless steel, aluminum, or enamel-coated porcelain, colanders usually



have a lot of small holes regularly spaced all over, although some are made of mesh. Better models have plenty of holes close to the bottom of the bowl to prevent liquid from pooling up.

Sieves, on the other hand, are made of wire mesh and are designed with one long handle. The better ones have a hook or a loop that rests on the rim of a pot or bowl, making it more convenient to collect strained liquid.

The bowl of a sieve can be rounded or cone shaped.

Sieves are usually referred to as coarse- or fine-meshed. You'll find yourself using a coarse-mesh sieve for most everyday tasks, from straining small amounts of stock to sifting flour or other dry ingredients. When it comes to making exquisitely clear consommé or a very refined sauce, you will want a fine-mesh sieve—one that eliminates all lumps or any hint

of graininess. A fine-mesh sieve can also be used for making smooth purées from cooked vegetables or fruits.

A classic conical shaped French sieve, called a *chinoise* (pronounced sheen-WAH), has a double layer of fine mesh (which can withstand the pressure of a wooden spoon or pestle forcing solids through it) and is generally considered the Rolls-Royce of sieves.

—Molly Stevens

Flavoring food with Parmesan

Parmesan cheese, more specifically *parmigiano reggiano*—the real deal from Italy—is undeniably one of the world’s great cheeses. It not only provides delicious, nutty chunks for nibbling, but it also fills an incomparable role as one of the most precious seasonings.

Think I’ve gone too far with that statement? Well, imagine your anticipation as you sit down to a plate of steaming, fragrant wild mushroom risotto. After taking your first bite, it’s obvious something is wrong: the potent flavor of the mushrooms overwhelms the dish. Why? Someone forgot to add the essential finishing handful of grated Parmesan, which would have melded the flavors of the rice dish together and rounded out the earthiness of the mushrooms. Without the accent of this amazing cheese, many rice and pasta dishes fall flat.

Beyond risotto and pasta, however, Parmesan contributes its nutty-sweet, gently salty, slightly spicy character to dishes across the menu map. Simple side dishes such as mashed potatoes and cooked

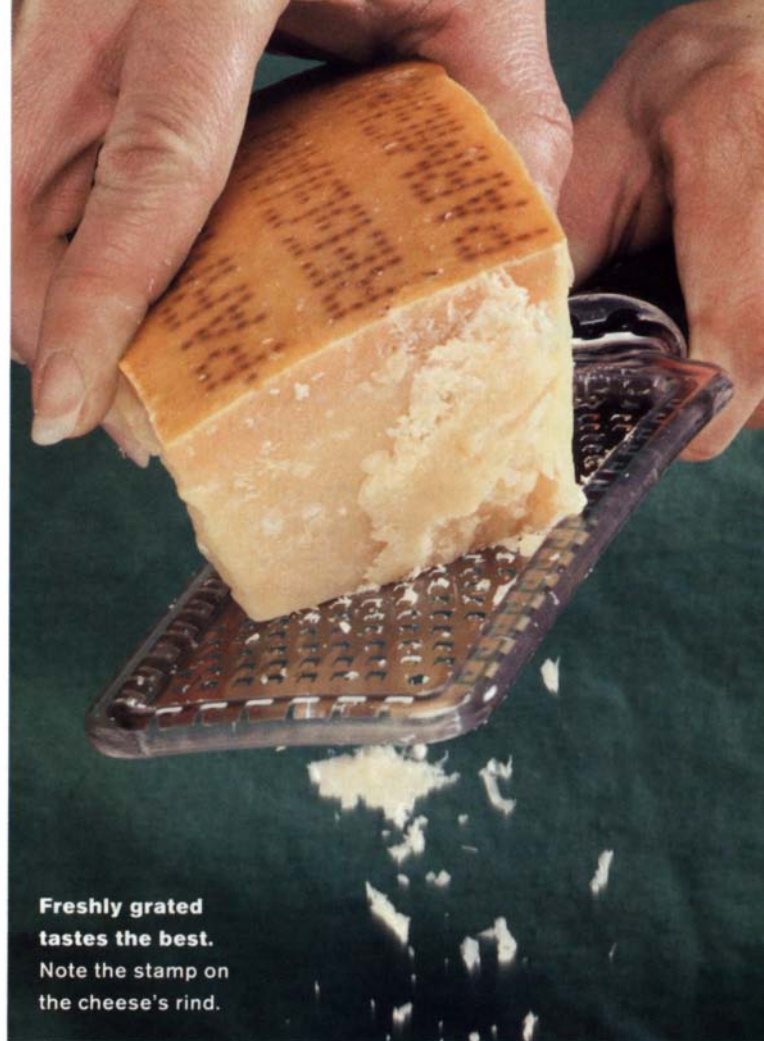
grains are more richly delicious when grated Parmesan is stirred in at the end. A bread stuffing benefits from a sprinkle of Parmesan, and a bit stirred into sautéed cauliflower or broccoli before serving acts as salt can, bringing out the vegetable’s flavor without calling attention to itself.

Choosing the best cheese

You’ll have no idea why this cheese excites me so if you are not using authentic *parmigiano reggiano*. Most supermarkets these days carry true *parmigiano reggiano*, and though it costs more, its superior flavor is worth the extra few bucks.

To tell if you’ve got the real thing, look at the rind. An authentic wheel has the words “*parmigiano reggiano*” stenciled closely and repeatedly around the rind of the entire wheel so that every piece of rind will bear part of these markings. The label signifies that certain standards have been met in the production of the cheese.

Look for the freshest chunk you can find. *Parmigiano reggiano* must be aged at least 18 months. As it ages, it develops a more complex fla-



vor and flinty texture. But that productive aging happens only when the cheese is still a large wheel completely protected by rind. Once the wheel is cut, the cheese should be used as quickly as possible.

The best scenario, and usually a rare one, is to buy a piece cut right from the wheel as you wait. More likely, you’ll be buying a prepackaged chunk. Choose one that’s tightly wrapped, preferably with the rind still attached on one side;

the rind helps keep the cheese moist. Pieces that seem almost white are way past their prime and will be closer to rock than cheese. Also avoid any cheese that has holes or looks oily.

Parmesan will keep up to a month in the refrigerator, wrapped tightly in plastic wrap. Rewrap it in fresh plastic wrap every time you use it.

A flavorful thickener

Aside from flavor, Parmesan can help thicken a dish and

Experiment with *parmigiano reggiano*

◆ **Thicken cooked corn with grated Parmesan.** Toss fresh corn kernels and the milk scraped from the cobs in melted butter, add a small amount of chicken broth, simmer briefly, and then lightly thicken and flavor the mixture with grated *parmigiano reggiano*. Garnish with fresh basil, if you like.

◆ **Top a baked potato with a generous amount of grated Parmesan,** a little olive oil, chopped sun-dried tomatoes, basil, and fresh pepper.

◆ **Substitute a little Parmesan in recipes calling for other cheeses.** A little added to the Cheddar in macaroni and cheese or mixed with the Gruyère

for an onion soup gratin gives the dish a more interesting flavor.

◆ **Add a piece of rind to a hearty bean soup as it cooks.** At the end, fish it out and cut the softened rind—it’s edible—into tiny strips to serve in the soup, if you like.

bind ingredients. I like to mix some into the raw ingredients for meatloaf and meatballs, for example, because it lightly binds the meat while adding a subtle, nutty flavor. In small doses, it gently melds the flavors—the herbs and spices I use—without making the meatloaf taste cheesy.

Boost the flavor of bread coatings. I almost always add a little finely grated *parmigiano reggiano* to my breadcrumb mixtures. Whether used on chicken, lamb, or pork, it creates a pleasingly nubby coating while helping to turn the coating golden and crisp. Or use the mixture to add a crisp, brown topping to casseroles, gratins, and baked pastas.

Finally, when you think there isn't a shred left to use, the rind can be saved or frozen and added at the beginning to a simmering pot of soup or stew to contribute long-cooked, mellow, earthy flavor.

Grating or shaving to affect flavor

Like many hard cheeses, *parmigiano reggiano* changes personality depending on how it's cut. This is something to keep in mind when using it as a flavoring.

For most pastas and risotti, I grate the cheese coarsely for shreds that are discernible but don't that overwhelm. I use the fine holes on the shredder when I'm adding some of the cheese to a stew or soup. A

spoonful or two of finely grated cheese added just before serving slightly thickens and enriches the soup, teasing the taste buds with just a hint of its source.

I also like to shave Parmesan into paper-thin curls with a vegetable peeler. Scattered over a plate of prosciutto drizzled with fruity olive oil, the Parmesan slivers awaken the flavor of each ingredient and connect them to one another in a memorable way while continuing to project their own subtle personality. If I were to sprinkle the same dish with grated cheese, it wouldn't be nearly as exciting; the silken texture of the thinly sliced cheese, as well the crescendos of flavor that come

when you bite into the discernible pieces, would be lost.

If you want to experiment with this notion, have ready three bowls of pasta tossed with a light tomato and fresh basil sauce. Sprinkle finely grated *parmigiano reggiano* on one, coarsely grated on another, and paper-thin slices on the third, and then taste each.

Only grate what you need when you need it. There's a big difference between Parmesan that's freshly grated and Parmesan that's been grated even hours before. For this reason, grate the cheese as close to using it as possible.

Leslie Revsin is the author of Great Fish, Quick (Doubleday). ♦

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Cooking pasta properly

Pasta dishes can be so wonderful—incredibly light, unbelievably flavorful—but they can also be dense, stuck-together disappointments. You can help your pasta dish be its best—whether it's a baked lasagne, a pasta salad, or a slap-dash plate of spaghetti and pesto—by knowing a few of the hows and whys of cooking the pasta itself.

When you drop pasta into a pot of boiling water, the starch granules on the surface of the pasta instantly swell up to their maximum volume and then pop. The starch rushes out and, for a brief time, the pasta's surface is sticky with this exuded starch. Eventually, most of this surface starch dissolves in the water and washes away, and the pasta surface becomes a soft solid.

Stir at the start

Many pasta recipes begin like this: "Bring a large pot of water, 4 to 5 quarts, to a rapid boil." Do you really need this much water? Well, if you're only boiling a small amount of pasta (less than half a pound), you don't need so much, but a generous pot of rapidly boiling water is helpful for several reasons: it comes back to a boil faster when you add the pasta; it makes it easier to submerge long, rigid pastas like spaghetti; and it helps to reduce sticking slightly by quickly washing away the exuding starch from the pasta surface.

To keep pasta from sticking, stir during the first minute or two of cooking. This is the crucial time when

the pasta surface is coated with sticky, glue-like starch. If you don't stir, pieces of pasta that are touching one another literally cook together.

Add salt, but not oil

You may have heard that you can avoid sticky pasta by adding oil to the pasta water. This can prevent sticking, but at a great price. Pasta that's cooked in oily water will become oily itself and, as a result, the sauce slides off, doesn't get absorbed, and you have flavorless pasta.

Adding oil may keep the pasta water from bubbling up and boiling over the rim, but this can also be achieved by making sure you use a large pot and also by reducing the heat a little (but still maintaining a boil). This is a much better solution than greasing your pasta and sacrificing flavor.

Salted water flavors the pasta. A generous amount of salt in the water seasons the pasta internally as it absorbs liquid and swells. The pasta dish may even require less salt overall. For a more complex, interesting flavor, I add 1 to 2 tablespoons sea salt to a large pot of rapidly boiling water. By the way, the claim that salted water cooks food faster (because of its higher boiling temperature) is exaggerated; you're not adding enough salt to raise the temperature more than about 1°F.

Hot pasta absorbs more sauce

Behind every great pasta is a great sauce. And it's not just



For more flavorful pasta, drain it thoroughly yet quickly (so it doesn't cool) and toss it immediately with a hot sauce.

the flavor of the sauce that matters, but when and how the sauce and the pasta get combined.

Toss hot pasta with hot sauce quickly—without rinsing it—so the pasta absorbs more sauce and flavor. As it cools, the swollen starch in the pasta crystallizes and becomes insoluble, and the pasta won't absorb as much sauce. Just so there's no delay, I always prepare the sauce first in a large skillet, even if it's simply olive oil, garlic, and pepper flakes. The second the pasta is done (I like it just a breath beyond *al dente*), I scoop it out of the water with a big Chinese ladle-type strainer or spider. I let the pasta drain over the pot for a few seconds, and then I dump it into the hot sauce, stir well, and set a lid on the skillet. I let the pasta sit, covered, to absorb the sauce for a minute or two, and then I remove the lid, stir again, and serve instantly.

Starch-enriched cooking water thickens the sauce

Rinsing the pasta after cooking is a bad idea for a couple of reasons. It can cool the pasta and prevent absorption of a sauce, and it can wash away any remaining surface starch, which at this point in the cooking can work to your advantage. The small amount of starch left on the pasta by the cooking water can thicken your sauce slightly.

For pasta sauces that include egg, like carbonara, it's a good idea to reserve a bit of the pasta cooking water to stir into the sauce. In this case, the starch-enriched water not only thickens the sauce a bit, but it also helps prevent the egg from curdling when it meets the hot pasta.

Food scientist Shirley Corriher wrote CookWise (William Morrow) and is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

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SOURCES

AT THE MARKET

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Republic at 800/206-6949, or visit www.cherryrepublic.com.

FOOD MILLS

Order the plastic Moulinex and the Cuispro from **Broadway Panhandler** at 212/966-3434. **Charles** department store carries (and will ship) the Cuispro (914/232-5200). **Sur La Table** carries Cuispro and the Rösle; call 800/243-0852 or go to www.surlatable.com. Order the 14-inch professional model and the Vigano from **Bridge Kitchenware** (800/274-3435 or 212/688-4220 in the New York metro area or www.bridgekitchenware.com).

COOKING WITH WINE

If there's no leftover wine to use up, you'll need to buy some. Here are a dozen widely available bargain bottles, chosen by contributing editor Rosina Tinari Wilson; none more than \$8. They're fine for cooking—and not bad for sipping, either.

Whites

- ◆ Barton & Guestier Vouvray (France, Loire)
- ◆ Italian Farmers' Wines Pinot Grigio
- ◆ Indigo Hills Sauvignon Blanc (California, Mendocino)
- ◆ Amberhill Sauvignon Blanc (California, Napa)
- ◆ Columbia Crest Sémillon (Washington)
- ◆ Rosemount Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Australia)

Reds

- ◆ Grand Cru Pinot Noir (California)
- ◆ La Vieille Ferme (France, Côtes du Rhône)
- ◆ Zonin Montepulciano d'Abruzzo (Italy)
- ◆ La Playa Merlot (Chile, Maipo Valley)
- ◆ Valdemar Vino Tinto (Spain, Rioja)
- ◆ Falling Star Merlot-Malbec (Argentina)

MASUN BEEF CURRY

If you don't live near a grocer that stocks Asian ingredients, try **The Spice Merchant** (800/551-5999), **The Oriental Pantry** (800/828-0368), www.ethnicgrocer.com, or www.templeofthai.com, where you can also buy a mortar and pestle. For dried peppers, kumquats, and lemongrass, try **Melissa's** (800/588-0151 or www.melissas.com) or **Frieda's** (800/241-1771 or www.friedas.com).

OLIVE OIL TASTING PARTY

Georgeanne Brennan recommends these sources for extra-virgin olive oils: **Strictly Olive Oil**, Jones & Bones Unltd. (831/462-0521). Betty Pstarfi, the owner, is well known throughout the olive oil industry and is often called on as a consultant to chefs. You'll find more than 50 oils listed by country and region in her free catalog. **Zingerman's** (888/636-8162 or www.zingermans.com). Ari Weinzwieg is a widely respected expert on olive oil, among other foods. The informative and extensive free catalog lists 16 special olive oils, described in detail.

You might also check out **Formaggio Kitchen** (888/212-

3224), www.cooking.com, and www.tavolo.com.

Some of Georgeanne's favorite olive oils are:

- ◆ **Mild-buttery:** Maussane-Alpilles, Provence, France (\$45 for 1 liter); Les Moulins Mahjoub, northern Tunisia (\$12 for 375ml).
- ◆ **Fruity-peppery:** McEvoy Ranch, Marin County, California (\$14 for 250ml); Monte Vertine, Tuscany, Italy (\$50 for 750ml).
- ◆ **Fruity-spicy:** Olio Verde, Sicily, Italy (\$30 for 500ml); Morea, southeast Peloponnese, Greece (\$19 for 500ml).
- ◆ **Full-bodied-earthy:** Nuñez de Prado, Andalusia, Spain (\$23 for 500ml); Almazara, Murcia, Spain (price not available).

OLIVE OIL PRIMER

Peggy Knickerbocker recommends these sources for extra-virgin olive oils: **Pasta Shop Fine Foods** in Oakland, California (510/547-4005 or www.rockridgemarkethall.com); **Dean**

same olive oil, so shop around.

Here are some of Peggy's favorite oils. From Italy, she likes Frescobaldi Laudemio (\$28 for 500ml), and Franco Boeri's Roi oil from Liguria (\$18 for 500ml). From California, she's fond of McEvoy Ranch (\$14 for 250ml), B. R. Cohn (\$9.50 for 200ml), and "O" Olive Oil pressed with Meyer lemons (\$17 for 250ml), as well as Sciabica & Sons' Ascalano fall harvest oil (\$15 for 12.7 oz.). From Spain, she recommends Nuñez de Prado (\$23 for 500ml), L'Estornell (\$12 for 375ml), and Lerida (\$17 for 500ml). For her "bulk" extra-virgin oil, she uses Colavita for braising, frying, sautéing, and roasting.

PARFAITS

You can order gianduja chocolate from **Maison Glass** (800/822-5564 or 914/265-5550). **Gourmet** (800/366-5900) carries 5½-lb. bars of Cacao Barry gianduja for \$34.20. For Valrhona guanaja chocolate, try www.chocosphere.com (877/992-4626) or **New York Cake & Baking** (800/942-2539).

BASICS

You can find bottle stoppers, Vacu-Vin, and Private Preserve at **Wine & All That Jazz** (800/610-7731) or **The Wine Enthusiast** (800/356-8466 or www.wineenthusiast.com).

FLAVORINGS

To order *parmigiano reggiano*, try **Murray's Cheese Shop** in New York City (mail-order, 888/692-4339; store, 212/243-3289). See also **Zingerman's** and **Formaggio Kitchen** under olive oil sources at left.

ARTISAN FOODS

Tommaso Affaldano makes his gelato year-round at **Marino Lookout Farm** in South Natick, Massachusetts (508/655-4294 or www.lookoutfarm.com).



& **DeLuca** (877/826-9246 or www.deandeluca.com) and **Kalustyan's** (212/685-3451 or www.kalustyans.com) in New York City.


These web sites—www.farawayfoods.com, www.chefshop.com, and www.gourmetoistore.com—have interesting olive oil selections. Retail prices can vary significantly for the

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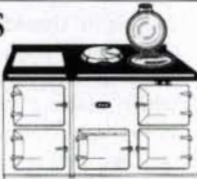
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NUTRITION INFORMATION

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
		total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
Herbed Farfalle & Grilled Chicken	35	500	220	25	43	25	3	17	3	45	250	3	per serving
Orecchiette Pasta w Romesco Sauce	35	380	150	9	47	17	2	12	2	0	290	3	per serving
Moroccan Pasta w Grilled Tuna	36	500	220	24	44	24	3	17	3	35	230	3	per serving
Cool Penne w Olives, Capers & Feta	36	520	270	14	49	30	8	17	3	35	1,110	4	per serving
BBQ Chicken w Kansas City Sauce	39	540	230	43	35	26	9	10	5	145	3,320	2	per 1/10 recipe
BBQ Chicken w Memphis Style Sauce	39	540	220	43	38	25	6	10	6	135	3,200	2	per 1/10 recipe
BBQ Chicken w Georgia Peach Sauce	39	630	230	43	61	26	9	10	5	145	3,320	1	per 1/10 recipe
Roasted Red Bell Pepper Coulis	42	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	55	0	per tablespoon
Roasted Red Bell Pepper Soup	42	200	100	6	21	11	2	7	1	0	590	4	per 1 1/2 cup serving
Spanish Roasted Red Pepper Salad	43	750	450	35	40	51	8	35	5	215	1,420	4	per serving
Grilled Potatoes	47	90	0	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	without seasonings
Grilled Potatoes in a Foil Package	48	270	170	4	24	18	3	13	2	0	1,170	3	w/suggested additions
Grilled Potato, Corn & Red Onion Salad	48	540	210	22	64	23	3	16	3	20	930	7	per serving
Filet of Beef w Blue Cheese & Rosemary	54	460	280	35	4	31	11	10	7	110	800	1	per serving
Cabernet Onion Jam	55	30	15	0	2	1.5	0	1.5	0	0	150	0	per tablespoon
Mussels w White Wine	55	680	330	55	21	37	6	22	5	125	840	0	per main course serving
Strawberries in Red Wine	55	70	0	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	per 1/2 cup serving
Warm Fruit Gratin	56	260	140	5	27	15	8	5	1	150	70	4	per serving
Masun Beef Curry	63	1070	740	43	50	82	55	18	3	90	1,110	11	per serving
Cucumber Relish	63	10	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	per tablespoon
Grilled Bread w Garlic, Olive Oil	66	100	25	6	13	3	0.5	1.5	0.5	10	460	1	per individual toast
Grilled Butterflied Leg of Lamb	66	310	110	47	1	12	4	5	1	145	290	0	per serving
Garlicky White Beans	66	260	70	13	36	8	1	5	1	0	300	14	per serving
Cherry Tomato, Mozzarella & Mint Salad	67	230	180	10	5	20	6	12	2	15	200	1	per 1/8 recipe
Summer Squash w Thyme & Pine Nuts	67	70	45	2	5	5	1	3	1	0	75	2	per serving
Individual Nectarine Tarts	68	200	100	2	25	11	5	4	1	15	30	2	per tart
Chocolate Rice Pudding Parfait	75	730	510	11	52	56	34	15	2	230	270	0	per serving
Strawberry Compote Parfait	76	420	240	6	41	27	16	8	1	165	105	4	per serving
Orange & Cardamom Marmalade Parfait	77	540	330	8	50	36	20	12	2	180	180	4	per serving
Grilled Rib-Eye Steaks & Arugula Salad	90	450	230	48	6	26	8	13	2	135	930	2	per serving

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

A Grilled Steak & a Salad — Perfect Partners for Summer Dining

Last year I spent a few days in Lucca, a wonderful Tuscan town that boasts some of the very best olive oil in the world. One thing I loved about the area was the simplicity of the food and the freshness of the ingredients. This was so evident when I worked with a woman named Antoinetta at her family restaurant, La Locanda. She had a little grill built right into the stove, and you wouldn't believe the delicious food she would produce. My favorite was her grilled rib-eye steak, onto which she piled a salad of arugula and tomatoes, sometimes with a shaving of *parmigiano reggiano*, too. If you have wonderful ingredients—juicy, ripe summer tomatoes; crisp, peppery arugula; fruity, flavorful olive oil; prime beef—you need do no more. But because it's not always easy to find the best ingredients at the supermarket for a midweek meal, you can give the dish a flavor boost with a quick rosemary-mustard rub that goes on the steak right before grilling. (It's not traditional, but it's good.)

If you do as Antoinetta does and pile the arugula on top of the steak, the greens wilt a bit, as they're supposed to. But Antoinetta insists that if you have enough salad piled onto the steak, the top leaves stay crisp. When you cut into the grilled steak, its juices mix with the lemony salad dressing for a bright flavor that's perfect for a summertime supper, preferably *al fresco*.

Joanne Weir's most recent book, *Weir Cooking*, is the companion book to the series she hosts, *Weir Cooking in the Wine Country*, on public television. ♦



Grilled Rib-Eye Steaks with Arugula Salad

Grilled new potatoes go nicely with this dish or—even easier—some good crusty bread.
Serves four.

2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbs. Dijon mustard
2 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary
4 rib-eye steaks (about 8 oz. each)
2 medium-size ripe red tomatoes, diced
2 bunches arugula (stems removed), very coarsely chopped (to yield about 6 lightly packed cups)
Lemon wedges as garnish

Heat your grill to medium high.

In a large bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, 2 Tbs. of the olive oil, and the garlic. Season to taste with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, combine the mustard, rosemary, and the remaining 1 tsp. olive oil. Season the steaks with salt and pepper and brush the mustard mixture on both sides. Grill the steaks until medium rare, 3 to 4 min. per side. Remove them from the grill and set them on individual plates.

Add the tomatoes and arugula to the vinaigrette in the bowl and toss together. Arrange the salad on top of the steaks, distributing it evenly among the plates. Serve immediately, garnished with lemon wedges.



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Gelato from the Old School

Master *gelatiere* Tommaso Affaldano has been serving up artful scoops of his Italian ice cream since the middle of the last century. But only since 1995, when he left his native Italy for Lookout Farm in Natick, Massachusetts, have Americans had the chance to sample his delicious handiwork. His dairy-based gelati (tiramisu and gianduja flavors, among others) are dense, creamy, and scant in butterfat—they contain no cream or eggs, just local organic milk—which makes them more about flavor intensity than richness. His fruit gelati contain no dairy at all, but they somehow combine the crisp, focused flavor of sorbet with the luxurious mouth feel of the smoothest ice cream. The key, says Tommaso as he tenderly rinses grit from a colander of raspberries, is to stay true to the old techniques and “to always respect the fruit.”



After sorting through and measuring (by eye) a pile of just-picked raspberries, Tommaso purées the fruit with a sugar syrup using an oversize hand-held immersion blender.



With an artist's eye and a craftsman's hand, Tommaso uses a spade to form an abstract “scoop” of cool, creamy, freshly made raspberry gelato.



He pours the mixture into a small, open-top gelato machine (circa 1975), whose spiral blade scrapes the raspberry mixture from the sides of a revolving canister. More often than not, a larger, newer, and more automated freezer sits dormant in the back room. Tommaso says the old machine gives him more of a hand in the process.



During the 15 minutes of freezing, the gelato thickens and pales as air is whipped in, but it's still much denser than American ice cream. Tommaso uses an oar-like paddle to give an occasional stir and to move the 11-pound batch to a serving tray.